the weekly
Standard

NOVEMBER 8, 2010 $4.95

CONFRONTING IRAN
REUEL MARC GERECHT
MICHAEL RUBIN

'STIMULUS, FRAU MERKEL?'

How resistance to the importuning of the Obama administration saved the German economy

BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WEEKLYSTANDARD.COM

Share the Perfect Holiday Reds.

Only $69.99
valued at $189.99

Keep the $120 Savings for Yourself.

12 bottles JUST $69.99 ($19.99 shipping, plus applicable tax). Normal price $189.99. You SAVE $120.

- ***"Best Ever" 2009 Bordeaux***
- ***Heavyweight California Cab***
- ***Made-for-Steak Malbec***
- ***Blockbuster Italian Primitivo***
- ***"What true Rioja is all about"***
- ***Silky Sonoma Pinot Noir***
- ***Cherry-Rich Sangiovese***
- ***Barrel-Aged Argentinean Cab***

Your case arrives for the holidays. It's packed with exciting reds from the world's great estates. Each wine proves a huge hit with your guests. Then you remember how much you saved on this special introductory dozen. It's a good feeling.

Welcome to the WSJwine Discovery Club. If you're happy with this first case, every 3 months we'll reserve for you an equally exciting dozen. There's no commitment. With advance notice, you accept, decline, swap wines or delay delivery. All cases are $139.99 (save at least 20%) and arrive with tasting notes and our full money-back guarantee. Give it a try today.

***Plus* FREE GIFT**

Order now for this deluxe lever-action corkscrew set.

WSJwine® from THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Call **1-877-975-9463** or visit **wsjwine.com/2379030**

Please quote code 2379030 when ordering. Lines open Mon-Fri 8am-11pm, Sat-Sun 8am-8pm EST.

WSJwine is operated independently of The Wall Street Journal's news department. Offer available to first-time WSJwine Discovery Club customers only and limited to one case per household. You must be at least 21 years old to order. All wine orders will be processed and fulfilled by a licensed retailer in the industry and applicable taxes are paid. Offer may vary. Please visit our website for complete list of shipping states, terms and conditions. Void where prohibited by law.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LOC, LC-USZ62-7449

Experience the 36 Events That Forever Changed History

History is made and defined by landmark moments that irrevocably changed human civilization. **The World Was Never the Same: Events that Changed History** is a captivating course in which Professor J. Rufus Fears—a master historian and captivating storyteller—leads you through 36 of these definitive events in the history of human civilization.

You'll explore moments ranging from the trial of Jesus to the discovery of the New World to the dropping of the first atomic bomb. Professor Fears also makes compelling cases for events you might not have considered, such as the creation of the Hippocratic Oath and the opening of the University of Bologna. More than just learning about the past, with this course you'll feel as if you're actually *engaging* with it.

This course is one of The Great Courses®, a noncredit recorded college lecture series from The Teaching Company®. Award-winning professors of a wide array of subjects in the sciences and the liberal arts have made more than 300 college-level courses that are available now on our website.

The World Was Never the Same: Events That Changed History

Taught by Professor J. Rufus Fears, University of Oklahoma

Lecture Titles

1. Hammurabi Issues a Code of Law (1750 B.C.)
2. Moses and Monotheism (1220 B.C.)
3. The Enlightenment of the Buddha (526 B.C.)
4. Confucius Instructs a Nation (553–479 B.C.)
5. Solon—Democracy Begins (594 B.C.)
6. Marathon—Democracy Triumphant (490 B.C.)
7. Hippocrates Takes an Oath (430 B.C.)
8. Caesar Crosses the Rubicon (49 B.C.)
9. Jesus—The Trial of a Teacher (A.D. 36)
10. Constantine I Wins a Battle (A.D. 312)
11. Muhammad Moves to Medina—The Hegira (A.D. 622)
12. Bologna Gets a University (1088)
13. Dante Sees Beatrice (1283)
14. Black Death—Pandemics and History (1348)
15. Columbus Finds a New World (1492)
16. Michelangelo Accepts a Commission (1508)
17. Erasmus—A Book Sets Europe Ablaze (1516)
18. Luther's New Course Changes History (1517)
19. The Defeat of the Spanish Armada (1588)
20. The Battle of Vienna (1683)
21. The Battle of Lexington (1775)
22. General Pickett Leads a Charge (1863)
23. Adam Smith (1776) versus Karl Marx (1867)
24. Charles Darwin Takes an Ocean Voyage (1831)
25. Louis Pasteur Cures a Child (1885)
26. Two Brothers Take a Flight (1903)
27. The Archduke Makes a State Visit (1914)
28. One Night in Petrograd (1917)
29. The Day the Stock Market Crashed (1929)
30. Hitler Becomes Chancellor of Germany (1933)
31. Franklin Roosevelt Becomes President (1933)
32. The Atomic Bomb Is Dropped (1945)
33. Mao Zedong Begins His Long March (1934)
34. John F. Kennedy Is Assassinated (1963)
35. Dr. King Leads a March (1963)
36. September 11, 2001

Order Today!
Offer expires Thursday, November 18, 2010

The World Was Never the Same: Events That Changed History
Course No. 3890
36 lectures (30 minutes/lecture)

DVDs ~~$374.95~~ **NOW $99.95**
+ $15 Shipping & Handling

Audio CDs ~~$269.95~~ **NOW $69.95**
+ $10 Shipping & Handling

Priority Code: 47921

ACT NOW!

1-800-832-2412

www.THEGREATCOURSES.com/5wks

THE TEACHING COMPANY®

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Industry Leadership.
More than a century in the making.

When it comes to investing for the future, we make sure the companies we choose share our commitment to leadership, quality and responsibility.

That's why Altria Group is proud to have added U.S. Smokeless Tobacco Company, John Middleton and Ste. Michelle Wine Estates to a portfolio that also includes Philip Morris USA and a continuing economic interest in SABMiller.

Altria's premier tobacco companies alone offer more than a century's worth of history and are the stewards of world-class brands like *Marlboro, Copenhagen, Skoal* and *Black & Mild*. These brands have the heritage and quality that help sustain financial growth and make us who we are today.

We also know that leadership means more than just financial performance. Our future success requires continuing to satisfy adult consumers while being responsive to society's concerns about our companies' products and underage tobacco use.

We're building on our history with an eye toward the future. To us, it's what being an American company is all about.

To learn more about our companies and their responsibility efforts, visit altria.com/responsibility.

Philip Morris USA ▪ U.S. Smokeless Tobacco Company ▪ John Middleton
Ste. Michelle Wine Estates ▪ Philip Morris Capital Corporation

altria.com

Altria

© 2010 Altria Group, Inc.

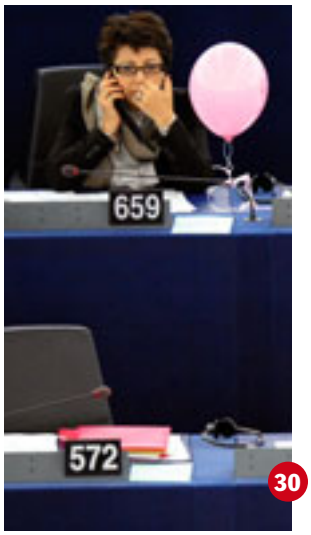
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Contents

November 8, 2010 • Volume 16, Number 8

7

18



30

2 The Scrapbook — *The anguish of the malcontents, Ditch it & more*

5 Casual — *Philip Terzian, phone-a-phobe*

7 Editorials

The Next Two Years — BY WILLIAM KRISTOL

Repeal—Now More Than Ever — BY YUVAL LEVIN

The Big D — BY THOMAS DONNELLY

Articles

9 WikiLeaks, Iran, and Obama — BY REUEL MARC GERECHT
It's hardly news that Tehran is up to no good

12 Coercing People Out of Their Cars — BY FRED BARNES
The road to hell is paved with bike paths

13 Don't Defend, Don't Appeal? — BY EDWARD WHELAN
When may a president decline to defend a federal law?

16 Sanctioning Iran — BY MICHAEL RUBIN
The more pressure, the better

Features

18 The Germany That Said No — BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL
The stimulus pleas of the Obama administration fell on deaf ears in Berlin.

22 President McCain at Midterm — BY TOD LINDBERG
What if . . .

Books & Arts

30 It Can Happen Here — BY ROGER KIMBALL
American government goes European

33 Future Guy — BY JONATHAN V. LAST
Clay Shirky has perfected the art of the bold, meaningless epigram

35 The Parent Trap — BY DAWN EDEN
A sesquicentennial for the father of Peter Pan

38 L.A. Constitutional — BY JOE QUEENAN
You'd be surprised by the best American city for walking

39 The Dude Moment — BY JOHN PODHORETZ
When hipness devolves into condescension

40 Parody — *Jimmy Carter's '77 Nova breaks down*

COVER BY THOMAS FLUHARTY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Anguish of the Malcontents

The Scrapbook is not ordinarily in the business of transcription, but a recent interview with novelist Jonathan Franzen—seen on the website of the *Guardian* newspaper in London—prompts us to reproduce one passage in full.

Franzen is the 51-year-old writer/activist who gained some celebrity a decade ago when one of his books was chosen to be an Oprah Winfrey "book club" selection, and Franzen responded by publicly disparaging her taste in literature, and worrying that his status in what he called "the high-art literary tradition" might alienate Oprah fans.

It is no small accomplishment to make Oprah Winfrey seem sensible and gracious, but Jonathan Franzen managed to do it. In the *Guardian* interview, however, he succeeds, against all odds, in making himself appear even less appetizing than in the Oprah episode. Sporting a few days' growth of beard, a self-consciously soft, condescending tone of voice, and the kind of ragged wardrobe that fairly screams "high-art literary tradition," Franzen discusses his homeland from the vantage point of a foreign capital and manages, in a handful of sentences, to personify the smug, disdainful branch of alienated American intellectuals.

His interlocutor, a Pakistani-born filmmaker named Sarfraz Manzoor, introduces the subject of American belligerence and hypocrisy about "freedom."

> Sarfraz Manzoor: The United States fetishizes freedom and forgets that, actually, there are greater freedoms to be had by having bonds.
>
> Jonathan Franzen: In the last decade America has emerged, even in its own estimation, as a problem state. That is, there were many criticisms one could make as early as the treatment of the Indians—it goes way back—and our long relationship with slavery. There have been some problems with the country at many points; in the Cold War we were certainly culpable. But the degree to which we are almost a rogue state and causing enormous trouble around the world in our attempts to preserve our freedom to drive SUVs, or whatever. . . . It does make one wonder what is it in the national character that is making us such a problem state, and I think it's [this] kind of mixed up childish notion of freedom. And perhaps it was really, truly, who left Europe to go over there? It was all the malcontents; it was all the people not getting along with others.

At this point, Manzoor asks Franzen if he is more "comfortable" in America these days. Franzen visibly flinches, and snickers:

> Ha, ha—no! It was possible while I was writing to look forward to some possibility of significant change. . . . Now people left of the middle feel puzzled and sort of anguished because we don't have an object for our anger, but the right is still as angry as ever. I mean, that's the worrisome thing about our upcoming elections. . . . The right is still just as angrily motivated as ever, and the Democrats are in disarray and feeling, well, we have power but the system itself is so screwed up, and we are relatively the adult party, so we are, you know, we are responsible for trying to make an unworkable system work. It's this kind of—ugh!—discouragement and dull throbbing anxiety.

To be sure, this is boilerplate to anyone who has spent quality time on an Ivy League campus, or is a steady reader of, say, DailyKos or the *New Republic* or *Huffington Post*.

But what intrigues The Scrapbook is the fact that Franzen stopped by the White House this past week for a "delightful" chat with President Obama. The subject of their private meeting, of course, was not disclosed; but we would guess that there was discussion of America's status as a "rogue state," the "childish" nature of our notions of freedom, the "malcontents" who settled this continent, the "screwed-up . . . unworkable system" that elected Barack Obama—and the "dull throbbing anxiety" that people like Jonathan Franzen (and the president?) must now be experiencing about democracy. ♦

Ditch It

One more happy consequence of this election is that President Obama, presumably, will discard his irritating metaphor about the economy being driven into a ditch, with Republicans at the wheel—who must now be content with riding in the back seat while Democrats do the hard work of pulling the car out of the ditch. And so on, and on, seemingly ad infinitum.

In the president's defense, The Scrapbook is willing to concede that, as metaphors go, we've heard worse (even if we recognize its premise is faulty) and it was probably effective the first or second time Obama used it. But after month upon month of relentless repetition—talk about driving something into the ground!—it is The Scrapbook's sincere hope that this particular rhetorical tic will be consigned to the scrapyard, or join the cash for clunkers program, or whatever.

For presidents do have the habit of grasping at favorite phrases or imagery, and never letting go. There was a time, during the late 1990s, when The Scrapbook felt as if its skull might explode if Bill Clinton spoke one more time about building a bridge to the 21st century. And a generation earlier, Richard Nixon would get a faraway look in his eye when describing "the lift of a driving dream." Even after he said it the thousandth time.

Barack Obama, for his part, is no slouch at expressing himself, even in the absence of his beloved TelePrompTer. So we're cautiously op-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

timistic that the car-in-a-ditch line will disappear this week, to be succeeded by a fresh, new, up-to-date metaphor that incorporates the election results: A locomotive careening off the tracks? An ocean liner sinking beside an iceberg? The 2009 Obama convertible flipped into a ditch, wheels spinning? ♦

The Bipartisanship Canard

President Obama, in recent speeches, has abandoned his oft-told tale about how House Republicans rejected his economic stimulus before he had a chance to discuss it with them. But the White House hasn't given up on spreading this canard. Press Secretary Robert Gibbs brought it up recently, and the *Washington Post*, no doubt fed the story by the Obama administration, repeated it in a profile of John Boehner.

The story, as Obama used to tell it, goes like this. When he went to the Capitol to talk to House Republicans about the stimulus a week after his inauguration in 2009—January 27, to be exact—they'd already issued a statement opposing it. So his mission of bipartisanship was undercut by partisan Republicans, whose decision was based on politics, not the needs of the country.

Some of the story is true: Obama did indeed talk to Republicans that day. The rest is false. Republicans didn't issue a "statement" expressing opposition to his stimulus. Nor was the supposed statement put out just as Obama's motorcade was leaving for the Capitol. And Republicans did offer ideas that might have led at least some of them to vote for the stimulus.

Here's what really happened. The day before the meeting, House speaker Nancy Pelosi and Appropriations Committee chairman David Obey unveiled the Democratic stimulus package—with zero input from Republicans. And word that Boehner and minority whip Eric Cantor were urging House Republicans to vote against the Pelosi-Obey bill leaked to the press a few hours before Obama arrived at the meeting. The next day, the bill passed the House over united Republican opposition.

This turned out to be the Obama bill. According to Republicans, the president could have told Democratic leaders to alter the bill to include some of their suggestions. Had he done so, a significant number of Republicans probably would have supported it. In any case, the Pelosi-Obey version was unchanged. And Obama didn't express any dissent when it was passed.

Gibbs, at his press briefing on October 19, said reporters should ask Republican leaders about bipartisan relations with the president. "You'll have to ask John Boehner, who, as I have used the example before, put out the statement opposing the stimulus as the president was about to load the motorcade to go to Capitol Hill to talk to the Republican caucus about the Recovery Act," Gibbs said.

A week later, the *Post* said White House staffers were "still angry" about Boehner's instant opposition. This account said Boehner had "snubbed" Obama by "denouncing" the stimulus. "That helped set the tone for his two-year effort to block Obama at every turn," the *Post* said.

In Obama's Washington, some canards never die. ♦

From Strength to Strength

The Scrapbook has finished reading, cover to cover, the just-arrived third issue of the *Jewish Review of Books*. The first two issues were terrific, but this one may be the strongest yet. The combination of range and quality is what's most striking. Adam Kirsch on Lionel Trilling and Judaism is deft and insightful; Abraham Socher, the journal's editor, writes

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Preserve Your Memories

The Slide And Negative To Digital Picture Converter

FREE STANDARD SHIPPING

when you order by Dec. 31, 2010.

This device converts old 35mm slides and film negatives into digital images without the need for a computer, allowing you to easily preserve your memories. Slides and negatives are placed into a tray that aligns each properly. Images can be immediately previewed on the built-in 2½" TFT color display; the touch of a button converts the image in 3-5 seconds and stores it on the converter's 32 MB flash memory (which can store up to 56 pictures) as a JPEG file. Images are transferred to a PC running Windows 7, Vista, or XP, or a Mac. It provides 2592 x 1680 resolution, automatic exposure control, and color balance, resulting in clear digital images without loss of quality. Uses USB or AC for power. 6¾" H x 3¾" W x 3¾" D. (1 lb.)
Item 76877 $129.95

1-800-543-3366
www.hammacher.com/slide
Use special offer code 600217

Lifetime Guarantee of Complete Satisfaction.

Hammacher Schlemmer

a fascinating review-essay on one of the most intriguing but also problematic movements in the Jewish world today, "The Chabad Paradox"; Anthony Grafton's "The Bible Scholar Who Didn't Know Hebrew," on Elias Bickerman, is a fascinating combination of biography and intellectual history. And there's more—on the remarkable struggle for Soviet Jewry, on modern Israel, on Kafka and André Schwarz-Bart. Not a page that's not worth reading.

Go to jewishreviewofbooks.com to take a look, and then subscribe to this handsome, thought-provoking, and important addition to the American and Jewish worlds of ideas. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

"It's going to entail . . . a real close look at the lay of the land, and to consider whether there are those with that common sense, conservative, pro-Constitution passion, whether there are already candidates out there who can do the job—and I'll get to be their biggest supporter and their biggest helpmate if they will have me—or whether there's nobody willing to do it, to make the tough choices and not care what the critics are going to say about you, just going forward according to what I believe the priorities . . . " (Sarah Palin, asked whether she'll run for president, on *Entertainment Tonight*, October 28). ♦

Election News Online

This issue of The Weekly Standard went to press the Friday before Election Day. But you don't have to wait a whole week for our brilliant analysis of the election returns. Read us all next week online. Visit weeklystandard.com early and often! ♦

the weekly Standard
www.weeklystandard.com

William Kristol, *Editor*
Fred Barnes, *Executive Editor*
Richard Starr, *Deputy Editor*
Claudia Anderson, *Managing Editor*
Christopher Caldwell, Andrew Ferguson, Victorino Matus, Lee Smith, *Senior Editors*
Philip Terzian, *Literary Editor*
Stephen F. Hayes, Matt Labash, Jonathan V. Last, *Senior Writers*
Matthew Continetti, *Opinion Editor*
Jay Cost, *Staff Writer*
John McCormack, *Online Editor*
Daniel Halper, *Deputy Online Editor*
Kari Barbic, Katherine Eastland, Kelly Jane Torrance, *Assistant Editors*
Emily Schultheis, Michael Warren, *Editorial Assistants*
Philip Chalk, *Design Director*
Barbara Kyttle, *Design Assistant*
Carolyn Wimmer, *Executive Assistant*

Terry Eastland, *Publisher*
Nicholas H.B. Swezey, *Advertising Director*
Catherine Lowe, *Marketing Director*
Richard Trocchia, *Fulfillment Manager*
T. Barry Davis, *Senior Advertising Manager*
Kathy Schaffhauser, *Finance Director*
Taybor Cook, *Office Manager*
Andrew Kaumeier, *Staff Assistant*

Max Boot, Joseph Bottum, Tucker Carlson, Noemie Emery, Joseph Epstein, David Frum, David Gelernter, Reuel Marc Gerecht, Michael Goldfarb, Mary Katharine Ham, Brit Hume, Frederick W. Kagan, Robert Kagan, Charles Krauthammer, Tod Lindberg, Robert Messenger, P.J. O'Rourke, John Podhoretz, Irwin M. Stelzer, *Contributing Editors*

Advertising inquiries: 202-293-4900

The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013), a division of Clarity Media Group, is published weekly (except the first week in January, third week in April, second week in July, and fourth week in August) at 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington D.C. 20036. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 421202, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1202. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders and changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 421202, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1202. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-850-682-7644 for subscription inquiries. American Express, Visa/MasterCard payments accepted. Cover price, $4.95. Back issues, $4.95 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. For a copy of The Weekly Standard Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Copyright 2009, Clarity Media Group. All rights reserved. No material in The Weekly Standard may be reprinted without permission of the copyright owner. The Weekly Standard is a registered trademark of Clarity Media Group.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hold the Phone

My alluring wife was a Junior Leaguer, once upon a time, and got a big laugh out of a lecture she was obliged to attend on making "cold calls." It was the first time either of us had ever heard the term, and she was especially amused at the idea of being coached about so simple a task as picking up the phone and calling a stranger.

I admit that I would not especially wish to be taught, as an adult, how to make cold calls; but an antipathy to calling strangers—and an abiding dislike of the telephone—is neither laughable nor alien to me. If either of us has to make a call on behalf of the household—whether, in phone company parlance, to a business or residence—I am happy to concede the privilege. My long-suffering spouse is alternately amused and annoyed by this reticence, and still cannot quite believe that a man of my age, given an opportunity to do his duty, would employ the Bartleby the Scrivener defense: "I would prefer not to."

The Freudian in me searches for an explanation for this behavior, and the only experience I can suggest is the childhood trauma—common to nearly everyone, I would guess—of being put on the phone when some adult relation had called long-distance. The ensuing dialogue—"Hello, how are you?" "We're fine, thanks. How's school?" "Pretty good, thank you. . . . I hope you and Aunt Charlotte can visit soon." "So do we."—was, for me, as awkward and painful as it was meaningless. Nor has adulthood smoothed out the mortification: I still freeze when the telephone's hideous bell begins to clang, and thank whatever gods may be for answering machines and caller ID.

I suppose there is a more charitable explanation. As a person of some conceit I prefer the monologue to the dialogue; and as a journalist I prefer to communicate through the written word. Indeed, if the words and phrases are in printed, rather than oral, form, I am as voluble as any cell phone user on the train: The language comes quickly, jokes abound, it's a veritable Niagara of puns, tart phrases, and snappy repartee. Put a receiver to my ear, however, and the mind slows down, the thoughts evaporate, and one labored sentence yields sluggishly to the next.

KEN WESTPHAL

Indeed, one of the nice things about email—or Facebook, for that matter—is that they nicely combine the immediacy of telephone contact without the voice-activated trauma. You have time to ponder your response, and refine the way you phrase it, or opt out altogether. On the telephone I feel as if I am testifying in court and a stenographer is taking down every misbegotten syllable. On email, or Facebook, or Twitter, I'm the Wizard of Oz: The "voice" and the pyrotechnics are basically theater.

Of course, not everyone approaches the subject from this point of view, or gives much thought to practices that are second nature for most people. Yet I am intrigued to note that the young seem also to have an aversion to the telephone (no doubt for reasons different from mine) but exchange a colossal number of text messages every month. Most of these messages have only a passing resemblance to language—OMG! :(LOL! u rock ☺ etc.—but might also represent the same disinclination to deploy the voice when a better, more satisfying, substitute exists.

This is especially evident to me when I am driving home from work at night. There is a particular intersection in Washington, off Farragut Square, where I must always stop for the light, and dozens of pedestrians cross the street or move along the sidewalk beside a subway station. A substantial percentage of them are holding cell phones to their ears, and during the warmer months I can eavesdrop on their conversation: "Hey! How ya doing" is frequently heard, along with "So what's going on?" and "Hi! It's me." Which, roughly translated, tells me that my fellow urbanites don't really use their cell phones for any practical purpose except making random contact.

Which, to someone of my nature, is incomprehensible. When I was in college there were two forms of communication available to the average citizen: the telephone and what we now call snail mail. In my fourth-year dormitory, there was exactly one telephone, a pay phone located on the wall of a floor above mine; and in those halcyon days, a long-distance call between Washington and Philadelphia, or vice versa, not only was reserved for occasions such as a death in the family, but also required an inconveniently large supply of coins.

I was happy to write a cheerful letter to my parents every two weeks or so, for which in exchange they would dispatch a welcome check. But I can say with perfect confidence that I never, not once, wasted an infinite number of nickels on a telephone call.

Philip Terzian

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the weekly Standard

The Next Two Years

Republicans and conservatives have done a good job, in recent months, of keeping expectations under control for the next two years. The cautionary lessons of 1995 are everpresent in Republican minds. They know, and they say, that after the GOP takes over the House on November 2 (as is very likely), and even if Republicans also win the Senate (which is possible), President Obama will still be president. A congressional majority will mostly be limited to playing defense, to checking any further ill-considered legislative efforts to expand the size and scope of government, as well as presenting to the American people a strong and coherent alternative to the big government liberalism of the Democrats.

These are no small things. But it's not a Republican Revolution. And, seeking to avoid the rhetorical and political overreach of 1995, Republicans will continue to go out of their way to explain that the results of the 2010 elections can be expected to affect ongoing public policy only at the margins. For that reason, they'll argue that the next presidential election is decisively important, and that much of the effort in the next Congress must be viewed as laying the groundwork for victory in November 2012.

John Boehner

NATE BEELER

This is a fair and important point, and a point Republicans and conservatives need to keep making. And yet this modest and cautionary account of things may understate what Republicans can accomplish in 2011 and 2012. For Republicans need also to recognize that they can improve the lives of their fellow citizens here and now, even while Barack Obama is president—though not as much, of course, as when he no longer occupies the Oval Office.

For one thing, GOP governors will continue along the paths marked out by Tim Pawlenty in Minnesota, Mitch Daniels in Indiana, Haley Barbour in Mississippi, Bobby Jindal in Louisiana, Bob McDonnell in Virginia, and Chris Christie in New Jersey, among others. With additions to their ranks, and with help from Republicans in Congress who can make some policy experiments at the state level easier to achieve, Republican governors will have many more chances to show that conservative principles are practical, effective, and can command public support not just as campaign promises but as part of a governing agenda. Meanwhile, a clear contrast between failed welfare state gigantism at the national level, and successful reform conservatism at the state level, would be of inestimable value to the GOP presidential nominee in 2012, whether or not he is (or was) a governor himself.

Republican legislators at the national level can make a real difference, too. Extending the current tax rates—something to which the president would, we think, have to accede—would help the economy right now. Definitively taking cap and trade and card check off the legislative table would also help the economy. And while real cuts in domestic discretionary spending won't be enough to deal with the debt problem, they can at least put us on the beginning of the right budgetary course. Strong criticism of the Fed's version of crude Keynesianism might also suggest to markets that we're not in for an endless regime of "quantitative easing" that leads to currency devaluation and stagflation. Some of the many regulatory burdens the Obama administration has imposed on the economy could be stopped or rolled back. All of this would reassure markets in the short and long term.

In foreign policy, Republicans will have a real achievement if they do everything possible to see to it that the Obama administration doesn't turn tail in Afghanistan, doesn't fritter away the accomplishments in Iraq, doesn't permit Iran to acquire nuclear weapons, and doesn't undermine our defense capabilities. Strong support for the administration's national security policies where appropriate, and constructive criticism of them where deserved, not with a view to scoring points but with a view to influencing actual American foreign policy, would be a genuine contribution to national well-being.

Yes, there are superficial ways in which improving ongoing domestic and foreign policy might be in tension with maximizing GOP chances in 2012. Successful GOP efforts along those lines would make the Obama administration a less dramatic failure. But that is a price well worth paying to help the country. And serving as a loyal, strong, principled, and effective opposition—an opposition that in some instances is effective in influencing real world policies and outcomes for the better, and in other instances articulates a clear alternative to the White House—is ultimately the path to success in 2012—and beyond.

—William Kristol

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Repeal—Now More than Ever

When the Democrats passed their health care reform legislation in March, they assured one another that the law would grow increasingly popular as its contents became better known and its early provisions began to take effect. Seven months later—as those contents have become better known and those provisions have begun to take effect—the law only looks worse, in both substantive and political terms. Its disastrous consequences are already being felt. Voters clearly know it. The case for repealing Obamacare and starting over has never been stronger.

The fundamentals of that case remain what they were back in March. The law will spend a trillion dollars over the next decade and increase taxes by half a trillion; create a massive new entitlement on top of those that are already threatening to bankrupt the government; impose a vast array of new rules and mandates on providers, insurers, employers, and consumers; insert the government in countless new ways between doctors and patients; increase the burden of Medicaid costs for the states; and cause millions of middle class families to lose the employer-based insurance they have today and pay even higher premiums.

Rather than reducing costs, Obamacare will increase national health expenditures by more than $200 billion—according to the Obama administration's own actuary. Rather than pave the way for entitlement reform, it will take the resources that future policymakers might have used to improve the structure of Medicare and use them instead to construct a new entitlement that will grow more expensive more quickly than Medicare itself. And all of this to increase the portion of Americans who have health insurance from just under 85 percent today to about 95 percent in 10 years, according to the Congressional Budget Office. There are far better ways to contain costs and so increase access to coverage—above all, by increasing the control consumers have over how their health care dollars are spent. Opponents of Obamacare proposed a variety of such approaches this year.

All this we knew, and said, last spring. But today, we know even more about why the law must be repealed. We know with far greater certainty, for instance, that Obamacare will make it very attractive for both large and small employers to stop providing insurance coverage, thereby sending millions more into the subsidized exchanges than the CBO accounted for, and thus sharply increasing the cost of the law and with it the deficit. We know that Obamacare will make it more difficult for many providers of nonstandard insurance (like colleges insuring young students, or employers providing bare-bones plans to part-time workers) to offer coverage. We know that it will drive up premiums—since it has already begun to do so. We know that it will create massive administrative headaches for businesses and consumers—for instance, requiring companies to file 1099 forms with the IRS for any vendor whom they pay more than $600 in a given year, and requiring a prescription to buy over-the-counter drugs with money from flex spending or health savings accounts.

We know that the people who designed the bill and the people charged with implementing it were not aware of a lot of this. Unanticipated consequences usually take a while to present themselves. But in the case of this law, some nasty ones have already become apparent, and it seems that more appear with every passing week. Just imagine the unanticipated complications that would ensue if the legislation's enormous and unwieldy new entitlement, Medicaid expansion, exchanges, subsidies, rules, and restrictions were to come on line in full.

We also know how the law's champions would respond to such problems—with a mix of strident bullying and daft denial. When some companies began to report the added costs Obamacare would impose on them—reports which are required by law—some congressional Democrats threatened to launch hearings to harangue them. When insurance companies explained that the new law was forcing them to increase some premiums, HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius sent them a letter warning that the government will not look kindly upon such honesty in the future.

All of these ominous signs point in one clear direction. To avert a monumental disaster and enact real health care reform, Obamacare must be repealed. The law's design—which points away from consumer-directed health care and toward an entitlement model in essentially every detail—makes tinkering at the edges impossible. Real reform first requires wholesale repeal. And it cannot come too soon.

—Yuval Levin

The Big D

The United States is at war. The Obama administration has, for better or worse, met its drawdown target in Iraq, but it has also made a far larger commitment to Afghanistan than it forecast in the 2008 campaign. In total, the demands made upon the U.S. military have not diminished. The costs of the wars we're in are essentially as great as they were when George W. Bush was commander in chief.

These wars have also imposed large strategic opportunity costs. In the Asia-Pacific region—the most economi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cally and geopolitically dynamic part of the planet—the ebbing of American power is increasingly apparent. Even Australia, as steadfast an ally as we have, framed its recent defense white paper around the need to "hedge" against a declining U.S. presence in the Pacific. A second set of opportunity costs comes within the greater Middle East. Most important, the inability to soothe fears of a nuclear Iran, or outline what might be a credible deterrent to a nuclear Iran, has the region on edge. The wars we'd like to deter are, if anything, more frightening than the wars we are in.

It's ironic but nonetheless true that as the world moves toward multipolarity, the demand for American security guarantees will rise. This is the explicit conclusion of *Global Trends 2025*, a report that summarizes the corporate wisdom of the U.S. intelligence community. Our military, however, is imperfectly prepared to play this role. Institutionally and bureaucratically, Iraq and Afghanistan may have improved the force's operational prowess. But the force is too small, and it doesn't have the weapons it needs for changing forms of conventional warfare.

The good news is that these problems can be solved by throwing money at them. Indeed, the defense budget is not only the most effective form of government spending, producing truly global public goods. It's also the most efficient form of government spending—we get all those goods for about 5 percent of U.S. GDP. As a value proposition, that's hard to beat.

Of course, at the moment, our collective minds are in a very different place. Pundits talk of American decline as a scientific inevitability. The Obama administration wants to spend money to reconstruct our domestic life while "resetting" and limiting "adventures" abroad. Conservatives, shocked by massive public debt and huge deficits, will do almost anything to constrain the size of government.

And yet we will have to get our minds around the facts of American global responsibility and America's under-resourced defense, and soon. These topics may have been ignored in our current campaign season. But they will be part of the legislative agenda for a new Congress. And they will be an important benchmark in judging who should be our next president.

Making government budgets—allocating scarce resources—is the essence of strategy and statesmanship. The inability to constrain social entitlements not only will reorder American domestic life, it will lead to a reordering of international politics. In this sense, then, Obama's policies are indeed pointing toward a new world order. The problem is that this new world order is likely to be more violent, less prosperous, and less free.

—Thomas Donnelly

Vote for America

By Thomas J. Donohue
President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Nearly 50 years ago, President John F. Kennedy encouraged his fellow Americans to "… ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." Let me suggest one thing that you can do to help your country today: vote. For more than 234 years, the United States has stood as a beacon of hope and freedom in an oftentimes dark world. But our strength as a nation has never come from a dictator or a king. Instead, it comes from the common citizen.

When an American steps into the ballot box, that citizen is the equal of any other—education, race, religion, and social class are all meaningless. It's one person, one vote. As a result of this system, America is one of the freest, most prosperous, and most stable countries in history. In other corners of the world, disagreement over the outcome of an election could lead to riots, tanks in the streets, and worse. But not here. The peaceful transfer of power has been our hallmark. We accept the results of elections and move on.

Voting is more than a right; it's a responsibility. Americans should educate themselves about the important issues that are at stake in each election. It's not enough to just show up on Election Day and pull the lever for the most familiar name. Instead, you should know where the candidates stand on the issues, and then support the ones who you believe will do the most to move this country forward. This civic engagement is what keeps our democracy vibrant.

The U.S. Chamber is doing its part to remind the American people of the importance of voting. We believe that free enterprise—along with our democratic values—is the foundation upon which this nation is built. That's why we have been conducting a nationwide voter education program to remind our fellow citizens of what's at stake in this election.

If we fail to live up to our civic obligations, we would be dishonoring those Americans who have fought—and died—to preserve our freedoms. From Washington's men encamped at Valley Forge, to Lincoln's army of emancipators, to the Greatest Generation preserving a free Europe, to today's American servicemen and servicewomen keeping us safe from terrorism, much has been risked—and lost—to make sure that we can enjoy the privileges of life as Americans.

So do something good for your country today, and go vote. You can find your local polling location and learn more about the candidates for federal office at www.voteforbusiness.com.

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Comment at www.chamberpost.com.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WikiLeaks, Iran, and Obama

It's hardly news that Tehran is up to no good.

BY REUEL MARC GERECHT

Mullahs, meet missiles: war games to show off Iran's air defense capabilities, November 2009

ALI SHAIGAN / AFP / GETTY IMAGE

The latest dump of classified WikiLeaks documents shows a few important facts: (1) The United States military unavoidably classifies a mountain of documents because of the easy loquacity of modern computerized warfare; (2) the release of these documents provides no startling revelations—anyone who'd read the liberal Iraqi émigré Kanan Makiya's writings in the 1980s and 1990s knew the savage potential for internecine conflict in Iraq; former defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld and his "light-footprint" generals Tommy Franks and John Abizaid were derelict in their duty to preserve order after Saddam Hussein's fall; and (3) the Iranians have been wicked in Mesopotamia.

This last point deserves further comment since it is of some importance in understanding how to approach the Islamic Republic today. The Democratic foreign policy establishment during George W. Bush's presidency became enamored of the idea that a U.S.-Iranian dialogue was possible if only opposition from the White House could be overcome. That former Clinton administration officials—who had watched President Clinton and Secretary of State Albright apologize repeatedly for American and Western perfidy against Iran, and subsequently had witnessed the collapse of Mohammad Khatami's reformist presidency—would think Barack Obama might succeed is testimony to both Obama's charisma and the Democrats' distaste for Bush. It's also evidence of how impervious American foreign policy often is to the words and actions of foreigners: No matter how many times Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei expresses his disgust for America ("Satan incarnate," "world-devourer," "the enemy of Islam"), diplomats, academics, and think tankers remain convinced that the real, inner Khamenei is a pragmatist.

The truth about President Bush: Until 2006, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her Iran point-man Nicholas Burns seemed open to high-level discussions with Khamenei's representatives, if only Iran's über-theocrat would allow such talks. In particular, Burns appeared to believe that Iran, after the election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005, wanted to deal with the United States. Like many foreign-policy cognoscenti, he thought Tehran desired direct negotiations, conceivably leading to the reestablishment of diplomatic ties. This openness to diplomacy may not have reflected President Bush's soul, but it suggests greater ideological flexibility in the Bush White House vis-à-vis Iran than is often assumed.

All flexibility evaporated in 2006, however, in part because, as we now see from the WikiLeaks cables, the information streaming out of Iraq about Iranian actions there was damning. Tehran was not only exporting lethal weaponry to Iraq, especially the deadly Explosively Formed Penetrator projectiles aimed at American and British armored vehicles and high-

Reuel Marc Gerecht is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD *and a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

powered, high-caliber sniper rifles that could punch through concrete, but also training Iraqi assassination teams in Iran and Iraq. These teams regularly killed Shiite Iraqi officials, chosen either because they were critical of Iran or because, as the WikiLeaks documents imply, random killings of officials caused instability in the country. Inside Iraq, Qods Force officers were actually guiding militant Iraqi Shiite forces in their actions. It's hard to know how many Americans Iranian-aided operations killed, but the number is surely in the hundreds. Simultaneously, the Lebanon war in the summer of 2006, where Israel took on an Iranian-armed and trained Hezbollah, did nothing to engender warm feelings in Washington for Khamenei and his men.

If the chronology of the WikiLeaks information, as reported by the *New York Times*, is correct, President Obama was extending an olive branch to Tehran while Iran continued its lethal activity in Iraq (and increased its nefarious involvement in Afghanistan). Again, this isn't really news for those who've followed Iraq: WikiLeaks just provides some of the official paper flow that piles up from the field and is raw material for briefing memos for senior officials and occasionally even the President's Daily Brief. Obama presumably extended his hand to Khamenei not because the president is slow to anger when aggrieved Third Worlders kill Americans, but because he saw Iranian activity in Iraq, deplorable as it was, as somehow extricable from Iranian foreign policy toward the United States.

In March 2009, Obama made a big Iran speech, in which he called for an "engagement that is honest and grounded in mutual respect" and quoted from the 13th-century poet Saadi to emphasize his good will and appreciation for things Persian ("The children of Adam are limbs of one body, Which God created from one essence"). He undoubtedly believed that "negative preconceptions"—Obama used the phrase in a widely watched Al-Arabiya television interview six days after his inauguration—lay at the heart of the tension between Iran and the United States. Not incompatible ideas and ideals, but "negative preconceptions." President Obama apparently thought he could do a better job than his predecessors of lifting the veil of American ignorance. He was willing to try even though engagement with "repressive regimes," as he noted in his December 2009 Nobel Peace Prize speech, "lacks the satisfying purity of indignation."

But the problem for President Obama, then and now, is that Ali Khamenei and his inner circle really like to kill Americans. They had relatively few opportunities to do so before the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. But those wars have brought American targets near. The Iranians are killing Americans not as Persian dynasties once fought the intrusions of Byzantines from the West and marauding Turkic horsemen from the East, because they are invaders. They're targeting Americans in Iraq and Afghanistan because they can do so easily. It doesn't help that Washington has been trying to establish in Iraq a Shiite-led democratic system that, if it starts to function properly, will complicate Khamenei's despotic rule in Shiite Iran. We may not see much significance in the fact that the regime-shaking, pro-democracy Green Movement developed after America established "outposts" in Iraq and Afghanistan, but Khamenei and his guards undoubtedly do.

The problem for President Obama is that Ali Khamenei and his inner circle really like to kill Americans. They had relatively few opportunities to do so before the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. But those wars have brought American targets near.

President Obama's appeal for direct, unconditional talks was upsetting to Khamenei—his "Satan incarnate" response soon followed—because it reinforced and amplified the all-consuming internal Iranian debate about authenticity and cultural collaboration. Can you be a good Iranian Muslim and not loathe the United States? Can you be a good Muslim and also say, as former president Khatami does, that the Western tradition of liberal democracy has actually developed better protections for many important human rights than has Islamic civilization? Can you be a good Muslim and say, as the respected 74-year-old dissident cleric Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari does, that Iran—the Muslim world—needs a revolution in religious thinking that would free the government from the scriptural dictates of the Holy Law and free the faithful from the politicized clergy? Or must you believe, as Khamenei does, that "there is no way to preserve the [Islamic] revolution except by resisting the United States" and all the insidious things it represents?

Obama sallied forth into a land in the midst of a cultural counter-revolution and didn't know it. He has had difficulty grasping the ideological nature of the conflict between the United States and Iran in part because he doesn't see the ideological war within Islam itself. If he did grasp it, the worldview expressed in his "New Beginning" Cairo speech in June 2009 would unravel. If devout Iranians define their Islamic identity as implacably hostile to the United States and Western culture, little running room is left for the president's felicitous intentions. It makes Tehran's possession of nuclear weapons more problematic.

Although the administration is almost giddy about the success of its sanctions policy, which is hurting the regime economically and spiritually, Khamenei is likely to win the nuclear tug-of-war with the West: Despite the pain, he'll probably get the bomb. And as Tehran gets closer to possessing a nuclear weapon, overcoming all the obstacles the West has

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thrown in its way, there is a serious danger that hubris will get the better of Khamenei and his men.

Their nuclear victory, moreover, is likely to coincide with a victory over their internal opposition. Khamenei and Ahmadinejad see these things as connected: When *Kayhan*, the newspaper of preference for Khamenei's ruminations, tells us that the principal reason the West aided the Green Movement's rise was to stop Iran's nuclear program (an utterly false charge since the West *didn't* help the Green Movement), we glimpse the conspiracy thinking of Tehran's ruling elite. It is often hard for Westerners to comprehend the extent to which *towtieh*, con spiracy, permeates the world view of those who rule the Islamic Republic; a defining feature of the lay and clerical dissident intellectuals who've propelled Iran's cultural reformation since the death of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1989 is their relative freedom from the conspiratorial swamp in which Khamenei and the Revolutionary Guards live. The opposition sees the sins (and virtues) of the West more maturely. They blame Iranians for many, if not most, of their country's debilitating problems. In doing so, they only prove to Khamenei and his kind that the internal critics of the regime are "tools of the West."

What Washington really needs to worry about is the possibility that the Iranian regime, which violently attacks the opposition at home, will similarly attack the far greater evil abroad. Once he has the bomb, inspired by that victory over the West, Khamenei may much more vigorously push back against the United States.

And President Obama invites the test of wills. As determined as the president *may* be to continue the fight in Afghanistan, the image of America that he conveys—the one portrayed by Bob Woodward in *Obama's Wars*—is of a nation eager to flee Afghanistan and Iraq and fight no more wars in the Middle East, no matter the provocation. President Obama has many virtues; embracing the job of commander in chief is not one of them. Add the psychological effect on Iran's ruling elite of the West's punishing sanctions, plus Khamenei's personal distaste for Obama, and you've got a recipe for a rebirth of much more vigorous Iranian terrorism against the United States. What we've seen in Iraq and Afghanistan (where the Iranians reportedly are now supplying ground-to-air missiles to the Taliban) is likely just a foretaste of what's to come.

A U.S. tank burns in Iraq: Iran was a supplier of anti-armor projectiles.

AP / HADI MIZBAN

President Bush made a serious mistake in not militarily confronting Iran when Khamenei started gunning for Americans and Shiites in Iraq. Bombing runs on a few Revolutionary Guard facilities would have sent a clear signal that any loss of American life would bring lethal retaliation. Such actions would have helped convey the message that Khamenei's pursuit of nuclear weapons will not diminish America's resolve to confront Tehran militarily if its hubris gets out of hand. To avoid a repeat of Khobar Towers, where the Iranians orchestrated a deadly terrorist attack against American personnel in Saudi Arabia in 1996, we should have shown that we would retaliate for any loss of American life.

Bush's mistake has been compounded by President Obama, who cannot possibly pretend to have the Nixonian I-might-just-bomb-the-blank-out-of-you gene. Many in the Democratic party, and more than a few in the Republican party, would like to play down the Iranian threat, comforting themselves with historically dubious Cold War parallels, emphasizing America's "measured resolve" against the Soviet Union. But the Soviet Union would never have given *laissez-passers* to members of al Qaeda, as Iran did after the embassy bombings in Africa in 1998. And Soviet and East German support to the Palestine Liberation Organization was positively benign by comparison with the aid that Iran has given a wide variety of Islamic terrorist organizations.

The Islamic Republic is a different type of menace from the Soviet Union, with a much more vicious, America-centric ideology at work among the regime's hardcore. We are fortunate that this ideology is contained within a state that has assets we can destroy. But Tehran needs to know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that we are prepared to shake the foundations of the Islamic Republic if it continues to kill Americans.

If the press reports are true about Iran now supplying surface-to-air missiles to the Taliban, then we are asking for Khamenei and the Revolutionary Guards to hit us even harder if we don't respond militarily to their provocation. Such weaponry is a significant escalation over Explosively Formed Penetrators. Any serious threat to American and NATO helicopters in Afghanistan could be militarily and politically paralyzing. As the WikiLeaks documents reveal, Iran is a connoisseur of *Machtpolitik*, which remains, alas, the Middle Eastern way of measuring men and their faiths. Iran's great Sufi poets of brotherhood and love are so cherished by ordinary Persians because the country's rulers have so often ruthlessly worshipped power. If the United States is to win in Afghanistan, President Obama will need to read Saadi less and Khomeini more. ♦

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Coercing People Out of Their Cars

The road to hell is paved with bike paths.

BY FRED BARNES

Have you heard about Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood's "tabletop speech" at the National Bike Summit? Probably not, but it's legendary in pro-bicycle, anti-car circles. LaHood got a wild standing ovation in March when he climbed on a table in a congressional hearing room, touted his department's "livable community program," and talked about getting people "out of their cars."

"We're going to put affordable housing next to walking paths and biking paths," LaHood said, amid cheers. "I've been all over America and . . . I've been very proud to talk about the fact people do want alternatives." You'll never guess what that alternative is. "They want to get out of their cars," he said, prompting more cheers. "They want to get out of congestion." Still more cheers.

LaHood was half right. People hate traffic congestion. But they want to get out of their cars about as much as they want to get stuck behind a bicyclist who rides at a donkey's pace before running through red lights and stop signs. What people mainly want is to stay in their cars and have LaHood do something to reduce congestion.

Like finance the construction and maintenance of highways and bridges to facilitate the flow of autos and trucks. That, rather than promoting "livability" or "the end of favoring motorized transportation at the expense of nonmotorized," is the job of the Department of Transportation. Always has been.

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

That the department has fallen away from its primary mission isn't LaHood's fault alone. The law that funds the large federal share of road and bridge construction expired last year. The 18-cent per gallon tax on gasoline still flows into the Highway Trust Fund, but it's not enough. The fund is insolvent.

Meanwhile, we're trailing China, India, Europe, and Brazil—Brazil!—in investing in "surface transportation." The drag on the American economy is enormous and indisputable. Most freight goes by truck, and the Department of Transportation has identified 227 truck bottlenecks, with delays costing $7.8 billion a year. Traffic congestion in general, according to the Texas Transportation Institute, causes 4.2 billion hours of lost time and 2.8 billion gallons of wasted fuel at a cost of $87 billion annually.

On Labor Day in Milwaukee, then on Columbus Day in the Rose Garden, President Obama plugged his six-year transportation plan, or at least a $50 billion down payment on it. "We will rebuild 150,000 miles of our roads, enough to circle the world six times," he said, plus "lay and maintain 4,000 miles of our railways" and "restore 150 miles of runways and advance a next generation air-traffic control system."

All this will be "fully paid for," the president declared. He didn't explain how. A White House fact sheet said the administration is "committed to working with Congress to fully pay for the plan." This puts financing in the hope-springs-eternal category. And, by the way, $48 billion of last year's stimulus package was devoted to transportation projects, not a dime of which was "paid for."

The administration's obsession with high-speed rail presents a funding problem all its own. Such rail projects have three attributes: Their projections of high ridership and gains for the economy are pie-in-the-sky; they fail every cost-benefit test; and their price tag is low-balled, leading inexorably to steep cost overruns.

Yet a paper issued by the president's economic advisers makes the dubious claim that high-speed rail is a way to keep America economically competitive with Europe. The stimulus included $8 billion for high-speed projects, again not "paid for." Now the administration is taking "the next step toward realizing its vision for high-speed rail," the Department of Transportation said in June, handing out "$2.1 billion in grants to continue the development of high-speed intercity passenger rail corridors."

On top of that, there's talk in Washington of spending $50 billion more on high-speed trains. Where the funding would come from is anybody's guess, but LaHood is fully on board. High-speed rail between cities is needed "so people can get out of their cars," he said in an interview last month with *Grist* magazine. "They can take a train ride to see Grandma rather than doing it in a car."

LaHood repeats a common fallacy about intercity rail (and often about light rail too). It doesn't replace the car. Unless Grandma lives close to a railroad station, her offspring will have to take a taxi or rent a car to get to her house. Or Grandma will have to drive to the station to pick them up.

Last year, George Will zinged LaHood as the "Secretary of Behavior Modification" for his fervent opposition to cars. LaHood all but pleaded guilty. Steering funds from highways to bike and walking paths and streetcars, he said, "is a way to coerce people out of their cars." His word, coerce.

But it's hardly an answer to traffic congestion. Most people, most of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the time, aren't going to ride a bike to work or walk. They're going to drive, even in the face of disincentives erected by LaHood.

As a solution to congestion in the foreseeable future, this leaves us with building more highways, repairing existing ones, and maintaining them. The question is how to pay for this. The current gas tax won't suffice. It hasn't been increased since 1993, and it's lost one-third or more of its value since then through inflation.

Republicans—conservatives especially—get red in the face when they hear of raising the gas tax. It makes more sense, however, than cutting back on the highway program or paying for it out of general revenues. President Reagan understood this when he backed a 5-cent increase in 1982. It "will make truck transportation more efficient and productive for years to come," he said in a radio address. "We will be preserving for future generations of Americans a highway system that has long been the envy of the world."

The days of envy are gone. What's required to restore a great highway system is a hike of 10 to 15 cents in the gas tax. Sounds like a lot, doesn't it? The gain—more and better highways, less congestion—makes the trade-off worthwhile.

The Obama administration, with its priority on ejecting people from their cars and its embrace of an environmental ethic that regards highways as evil, is unlikely to champion a higher gas tax. Any other tax increase you can imagine, yes. This one, no. That means Republicans will have to step up. They can insist the revenues be used solely for highways and bridges. Local governments would then be free to spend on bikeways.

In his tabletop speech, LaHood said he and his wife take their bikes to the path along the C&O Canal and "ride as far as we possibly can." That's nice. But it's interesting, and perhaps telling, that the canal, as a major mode of transportation, has been obsolete since the 1880s—a lot like bicycling and walking. ♦

Don't Defend, Don't Appeal?

When may a president decline to defend a federal law? BY EDWARD WHELAN

The recent district court ruling that the "don't ask, don't tell" law governing homosexuals in the military is unconstitutional triggered speculation that the Obama administration, which is eager for Congress to repeal "don't ask, don't tell," might choose not to appeal the ruling. That speculation proved mistaken—an appeal has been filed—but it provides an apt occasion to explore the principles that ought to govern a presidential administration in deciding whether to defend a federal law that it disfavors.

In considering those principles, it's useful to test them against one's political biases. So both supporters and opponents of "don't ask, don't tell" might consider, for example, the following hypothetical: It's 2014, and Obamacare has withstood several constitutional attacks in the federal courts of appeals, but a district court has just issued a nationwide injunction against that law's continued implementation. Is it proper for the Republican president who defeated Barack Obama's bid for reelection to decline to appeal the injunction?

At the outset, it is essential to distinguish between laws that an administration opposes or disfavors on policy grounds only and laws that it regards as unconstitutional. When a president opposes a law on mere policy grounds, he is nonetheless obligated to defend it vigorously. That obligation flows directly from the president's duty under Article II of the Constitution to "take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed," for the duty to faithfully enforce a law entails defending it against attacks in court.

The president's "take Care" obligation does not apply to laws that are unconstitutional, as the Constitution is first and foremost among the "Laws" that the president is dutybound to "take Care … be faithfully executed." But that observation does not resolve the question how the president ought to go about deciding whether a particular law is unconstitutional and therefore ought not be enforced or defended. May he, for example, regard a law as unconstitutional only if the Supreme Court's precedents clearly dictate that it would so hold? Or may he form that judgment on his own, where the Court's case law is unclear or even where his judgment is contrary to the Court's ruling that the law is constitutionally permissible?

As it turns out, these questions have been weightier in theory than in practice, at least insofar as the Department of Justice's duty to litigate in defense of a federal statute is at issue. Over the last several decades, presidential administrations with very different theoretical understandings of the president's authority to interpret the Constitution have embraced the general proposition that, with the exception of laws that intrude on executive-branch prerogatives, the Department of Justice should vigorously defend the constitutionality of any law for which a reasonable defense may be made under existing precedents.

This general proposition has not been absolute. In rare instances, as

Edward Whelan is president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center and a regular contributor to National Review Online*'s* Bench Memos *blog on constitutional law.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Clinton Justice Department official Walter Dellinger outlined in a recent *New York Times* op-ed, an administration has determined not to offer a substantive constitutional defense of a defensible law. Instead, it has pursued only a nominal defense: It sets forth in its briefs its position that the law is unconstitutional but also files a formal appeal from a decision adverse to the law. That formal appeal ensures that the judicial hierarchy can operate to correct a wrong decision. Further, as Dellinger explains, when an administration pursues the option of making only a nominal defense, the courts can and should invite other interested and capable persons to defend the law.

In theory, a hypothetical future president might exercise his powers much more robustly by declining to enforce and defend any law that he regards as unconstitutional, no matter how defensible it is under the Court's precedents. There are limits, however, on how effective such an approach might be. The reality is that a president can't, by mere nonenforcement, unilaterally and permanently wipe from the books a federal law that the courts might deem to be constitutionally permissible. That law might, for example, be enforceable by private parties or by a subsequent president.

Further, it would be cowardly and irresponsible for a president to attempt to nullify a law by declining to appeal a district-court ruling that strikes down the law. If the president believes that the law shouldn't be enforced and defended, he ought to have the courage to adopt that course of conduct from the outset, rather than hiding behind the ruling of an inferior-court judge and trying to prevent that ruling from being reviewed by higher courts.

Let's now apply these principles to the "don't ask, don't tell" case and the Obamacare hypothetical.

To date, the Obama administration's objection to "don't ask, don't tell" has been entirely on policy grounds. It has therefore been obligated, under the president's "take Care" duty, to defend "don't ask, don't tell" vigorously in court. It has badly failed to live up to that obligation. Among other things, taking the path of least political resistance within the administration, then-Solicitor General Elena Kagan chose in 2009 not to seek Supreme Court review of a rogue Ninth Circuit decision that, in conflict with precedents from the Supreme Court and other circuits, subjected "don't ask, don't tell" to heightened scrutiny. Then, when the district court applied the heightened scrutiny required by the Ninth Circuit decision, the Department of Justice (in the words of the district court) "called no witnesses, put on no affirmative case, and only entered into evidence [the law's] legislative history." Only a naif would fail to recognize that the Obama administration has been deliberately sabotaging the litigation (just as it has also been undermining the Defense of Marriage Act).

The Obama administration clearly isn't going to comply with its duty to vigorously defend 'don't ask, don't tell' in court. It would do better to get largely out of the way and let others offer a real defense.

Obama's Department of Justice has filed an appeal of the "don't ask, don't tell" ruling. But that appeal is consistent with a continued desire merely to pretend to defend "don't ask, don't tell." The Ninth Circuit panel on appeal will be applying the heightened-scrutiny standard that the Department of Justice chose not to challenge last year, and it will be reviewing the wildly one-sided record that Justice let the district court compile. So the result in the Ninth Circuit is virtually foreordained.

Might the Obama administration now take the position, as Dellinger recommends, that "don't ask, don't tell" is unconstitutional? Such a position would be a remarkable about-face: In implausibly explaining to Congress the Justice Department's decision last year not to seek Supreme Court review of the Ninth Circuit ruling, Attorney General Eric Holder never remotely suggested that Justice had any doubts about the constitutionality of "don't ask, don't tell." Nor is there any apparent principle that would explain why an administration that has conspicuously claimed to adhere to the general practice of defending the constitutionality of laws that can reasonably be defended would make an exception in this instance.

That said, since the Obama administration clearly isn't going to comply with its constitutional duty to vigorously defend "don't ask, don't tell" in court, it would do better to get largely out of the way and let others offer a real defense, both in the Ninth Circuit and in any subsequent Supreme Court review. If that displacement requires a flimsy and implausible constitutional assertion by the Department of Justice and only a nominal defense, that would be a small price to pay.

As for the Obamacare hypothetical: A Republican president in 2014 whose objections to Obamacare rested entirely on policy grounds would be constitutionally obligated to defend the law vigorously in court. That vigorous defense would require appealing any district-court ruling against the law and seeking to block the court's injunction from taking effect pending appeal.

If the Republican president had constitutional objections to Obamacare, he would have the option of doing what he could to implement those objections unilaterally as soon as he took office in 2013. If he chose not to do so, he would be obligated to defend the law with vigor, and he shouldn't pretend that the district court's injunction gave him any basis not to continue to do so. The Obama administration's dereliction of duty in "don't ask, don't tell" litigation is not a worthy model to follow. ♦

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GOV'T ISSUED GOLD COINS

Nationwide Coin and Bullion Reserve announces the final release of 2,500 congressionally authorized, fully backed by the U.S. Government, completely free of dealer mark up, $5 Gold American Eagles at the incredible price of

ONLY
$138.00
EACH

FOR THE INVESTOR

If you had $25,000 in gold in 2001 at $290 per oz you would have almost $100,000 at today's gold prices. These profit margins are unheard of in today's volatile financial market. Experts say this is just the beginning. Gold last touched $850 an ounce on Jan. 21, 1980, just after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the seizure of U.S. hostages in Iran. Inflation was running in the triple digits. In today's terms, this would be equivalent to $2,000 an ounce suggesting the current nine year bull market has much further to run. With the Fed's decision to print, print, print trillions of dollars Americans will soon see inflation like never before. With these current conditions we are pleased to provide special arrangements for orders of $25,000 and more. Numerous experts are now predicting gold at $5,000 an ounce your $25,000 could be worth $125,000 in the near future. Please understand that when you convert money to U.S. Government Gold you have not spent your money, but rather transferred its value from a declining paper currency, to a powerful asset providing a long term hedge against inflation. Smart investors are currently moving 25-30% of their paper assets into gold. Call today for the opportunity to turn your $25,000 into $125,000. **Toll free 877-817-1220.**

FINAL RELEASE

Nationwide Coin and Bullion Reserve announces the final release of 2,500 congressionally authorized, fully backed by the U.S. Government, completely free of dealer mark up, $5 gold coins at the incredible low price of only $138.00 each. This at cost offer for American citizens may be your final opportunity to own government gold free of dealer mark up. Gold is currently trading around $1,200.00 per ounce and experts predict gold to skyrocket to as much as $5,000.00 an ounce. Inflation, the printing of trillions of dollars, two wars and the threat of terrorism all have caused the demand for gold to soar. Leading financial experts, Rob McEwen, Christopher Wyke, Peter Schiff and James DiGeorgia all predict $5,000/oz. gold. Due to extremely limited supplies we must adhere to a strict limit of ten coins per household. Nationwide Coin and Bullion Reserve has set these beautiful U.S. Government gold coins for immediate public release and cannot guarantee sufficient inventory to supply current demand. Order now to avoid disappointment. This at cost public offer will sell out immediately. Overage orders may be cancelled and your checks returned uncashed. Ordering now may be your last chance to own these magnificent government issued gold coins at this level. **Call toll free 877-817-1220.**

Authorized by Congress
In God We Trust

NATIONWIDE COIN & BULLION RESERVE

CALL TOLL FREE (24 hrs a day seven days a week)

1-877-817-1220

VISA • MASTERCARD • DISCOVER • AMEX • CHECK

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS NOW AVAILABLE FOR ORDERS OVER $25,000

Vault # WSN-100906

Minimum order 5 gold coins.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sanctioning Iran

The more pressure, the better.

BY MICHAEL RUBIN

Iran today may be the most sanctioned country on earth. After the International Atomic Energy Agency's 2005 finding that Tehran was not in compliance with its Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty safeguards obligations, the United Nations Security Council has slapped four sets of sanctions on the Islamic Republic, the most recent round in June. However, in order to hide its activities and protect its resources, the Iranian regime has mastered a version of Three-card Monte: For every Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps front company or bank that the international community sanctions, the Iranian government simply creates another. The fact is that the quest for international consensus has diluted the U.N.'s efforts, which are hardly the "crippling sanctions" that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton promised.

Far more effective than multilateral sanctions are those imposed unilaterally. Whereas the White House and State Department may believe that sanctions require a U.N. imprimatur for international legitimacy, it is Congress that has traditionally led the charge against rogue states. For example, it was Congress that passed the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act in 1996, despite presidential concerns that such sanctions could hamper diplomacy. Congressional sanctions are powerful because they exploit the real vulnerabilities of such regimes. The Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability and Divestment Act of 2009 that Congress passed in June, for example, targets the imported gasoline that the Iranian economy needs to function fully.

Iranian leadership says that the sanctions are meaningless. "The sanctions will . . . make the Iranian economy blossom," said President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has similarly argued that sanctions will only strengthen the resolve of the Iranian people, but domestic critics see it differently. One political science professor at the University of Tehran told the daily *Aftab* that the regime's bluster is "all entertainment and propaganda."

Gasoline sanctions seem to be especially potent (Japan's Nomura Group estimated that sanctions might reduce Iranian oil exports by 25 percent), and now that Japan and South Korea have added their own unilateral sanctions to those of the United States and Europe, an Iranian economy that was already in shambles after decades of mismanagement is starting to feel the sting. As the head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Hassan Rowhani, said after the International Atomic Energy Agency passed its first resolution condemning Iran for its nuclear cheating in 2005: "Our country's economy was greatly affected. . . . Almost all of Iran's economic activities were locked. A decline in business activities pervaded the entire market."

One Iranian labor leader estimates that unemployment is at 25 percent, or nearly three times higher than the government's official figures, and not even the Iranian parliament believes Ahmadinejad's claims to have reduced inflation to single-digits. The Iranian president's political adversaries understand that the sanctions have further eroded the regime's credibility. An aide to former president Mohammad Khatami, Abdollah Ramezanzadeh, criticized his boss's successor when he lamented the cost of sanctions imposed on Ahmadinejad's watch. "We should have negotiated for so long and benefited from the atmosphere of negotiations to the extent that we could import all the technology needed," said Ramezanzadeh, comparing the traditional Iranian approach with the current president's confrontational style. In September, former president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani told the Islamic Republic's highest clerical body, the Assembly of Experts, "We have never been faced with so many sanctions." He urged the regime "to take the sanctions seriously and not as a joke."

Indeed, for the regime they are no laughing matter. Between September 27 and October 11, Iran's currency crashed, sliding more than 20 percent against the dollar. While the director of Iran's Central Bank claimed it was simply a hiccup, the Iranian newspapers blamed the drop on the fact that the United Arab Emirates, which had historically profited from helping Iran evade sanctions, was now enforcing them. In Tehran and other Iranian cities, importers shut their doors amidst financial uncertainty. There are other signs that sanctions have begun to bite: Train fares have increased 30 to 40 percent over the past month, air fares are on the rise, and international travel has become more difficult as European airports and even Kuwait have refused to refuel Iranian airliners. Sanctions might even affect the pace of the nuclear program. "They may slow down the work," said Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization.

Sanctions are proving effective, and there's no reason to relieve the pressure right now by rushing out to engage the regime. Certainly, a diplomatic solution to Iran's nuclear ambitions is ideal, but under the wrong circumstances engagement could hasten conflict. Against the backdrop of the Islamic Republic's faltering economy, the worst move for the Obama administration to make is to offer incentives that mitigate pressure on Tehran. To slow Iran's nuclear progress, delegitimize the Iranian regime in the eyes of the Iranian people, and avoid conflict, the best way forward is to augment, rather than alleviate sanctions. ♦

Michael Rubin is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

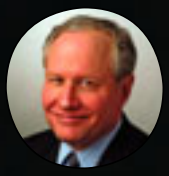
ALL ABOARD!

The Weekly Standard **returns to Europe on a ten-day cruise**

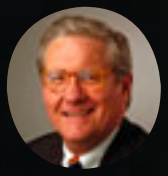
May 12 - 22, 2011

S.S. WEEKLY STANDARD

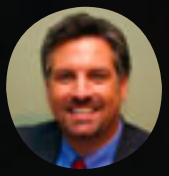
Join *The Weekly Standard* as we visit:
LONDON, CHERBOURG, BRUGES, LISBON, BARCELONA, & MORE.



William Kristol
Editor



Fred Barnes
Executive Editor



Stephen Hayes
Senior Writer

Amb. John R. Bolton
Former US Ambassador
to the United Nations

To reserve your cabin today or
learn more, call **1-800-707-1634**
or visit us online at ***twscruise.com.***

Holland America Line

THE CRUISE AUTHORITY

the weekly Standard

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Germany That Said No

The stimulus pleas of the Obama administration fell on deaf ears in Berlin. Guess whose economy is growing faster.

By Christopher Caldwell

"You won't find a lot of Keynesians here," explained one German economic policymaker in Berlin in September. That will not be news to anyone who has spoken to his counterparts in Washington. In their view, Germany is a skulker, a rotten citizen of the global economy, the macroeconomic equivalent of a juvenile delinquent, or worse. It is a smart aleck in the emergency ward that is the global economy. It is a flouter of the prescriptions of the new Doctor New Deal who sits in the White House.

Germany has been scolded, even browbeaten, by Obama administration officials, from Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner on down, for saving too much and spending too little. It has refused to stimulate its economy as the United States has done, on the grounds that the resulting budget deficits would not be sustainable and the policies themselves would not work. Administration officials have not been the only ones to warn the Germans about the path they're on. On the eve of last summer's G-20 summit in Toronto, the economist and *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman gave an interview to the German business paper *Handelsblatt* in which he said that, while Germany might think its deficits are big, they are peanuts "from an American viewpoint." Germany cannot say it wasn't warned.

And now the consequences of Germany's waywardness are clear. Germany's growth in this year's second quarter was 2.2 percent on a quarter-to-quarter basis. That means it is growing at almost 9 percent a year. Its unemployment rate has fallen to 7.5 percent, below what it was at the start of the global financial crisis—indeed, the lowest in 18 years. The second-biggest Western economy appears to be handling this deep recession much more effectively than the biggest—and emerging from it much earlier.

Christopher Caldwell is a senior editor at The Weekly Standard.

This means that something in our economic dogmas is probably false. Perhaps the policies of Keynesian stimulus favored by the Obama administration are simply misguided, and Germany is reaping the benefit of not pursuing them. Perhaps Germany is pursuing a stimulus, albeit in a lower-key and harder-to-measure way. Perhaps, when an economy is as globalized as ours now is, stimulus will not really work unless it is pursued uniformly across countries. All of these explanations are partially true.

Even before the present financial crisis, Germany and the United States were thought of as embodying two opposite dispositions on matters of monetary policy and fiscal discipline. Both dispositions were the product of history. Germany was the archetypal inflation-fighting country. That is because, when it tried to inflate its way out of the reparations payments imposed on it after World War I, it lost control, as countries that print too much money usually do. The result was people carting around trillions of marks in wheelbarrows to buy a ham sandwich.

The United States, supposedly, has had more to fear from deflation. The late nineteenth-century deflations brought misery to farmers and William Jennings Bryan to national prominence. But since most macroeconomists are idolaters of both John Maynard Keynes and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the lesson they prefer is that of 1937, when FDR "withdrew stimulus too fast" and plunged the United States back into depression. There are two problems with this argument, one historical, one theoretical. First, government spending fell by very little that year, as Amity Shlaes and others have pointed out—less than 1 percent, by some calculations. Second, if four years into the New Deal was too soon to cut spending, then a fan of the New Deal is likely to believe it's always too soon to cut spending. Stimulus plans seem to work that way.

Chancellor Angela Merkel does have typically "German" worries about deficits. They are heightened by a new fac-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tor—demographic decline. In a country with a shrinking population, deficits are more dangerous than they would be otherwise—you need much higher per capita growth to get yourself out of the hole you have dug.

Cultural biases aside, German policymakers do think the United States is misguided as a matter of economic reasoning. "We think they're wrong," says one top official. "We think you don't get the multiplier they say." The multiplier is the measure of how much economic activity results from emergency government spending. Discussions of the multiplier were at the center of the debates over the Obama stimulus plan. Christina Romer and the president's other economic advisers argued that the multiplier would be around 1.6—the government would create $1.60 worth of economic activity for every dollar it spent. At those rates, who can afford not to stimulate? "Our research says the multiplier is more like .60," says the German official. If he is correct, then a stimulus plan can actually deaden an economy rather than stimulate it. If he is correct, you might have been as well off to have taken the stimulus money and thrown it away.

What he calls "our research" does not mean studies commissioned by the German government. It means academic papers that are either skeptical about stimulus in general or question the long-reigning orthodoxy that stimulus plans based on government spending outperform stimulus plans based on tax cuts. The consensus on these matters is shifting in the academy, too. The Harvard economist Alberto Alesina and his colleague Silvia Ardagna published an influential paper last fall in which they surveyed all the major fiscal adjustments in OECD countries between 1970 and 2007 and showed that tax cuts are more likely to increase growth than spending hikes. One of their most controversial findings—which comes from the work of two other Italian economists—is that cutting deficits can be expansionary, particularly if it is done through "large, decisive" government spending cuts, as it was in Ireland and Denmark in the 1980s. More generally, Alesina has argued that "monomaniacal" Keynesians have focused unduly on aggregate demand.

This is certainly the view of German policymakers. "Three years ago, no supply-side economist, no rational-expectations economist was ready for what was about to happen," one official says, alluding to two schools of economic thought generally considered conservative. "They were frustrated, disoriented. The Keynesians were not. They said: 'We have the solution. Run deficits.'" It is only now, he says, that non-Keynesian economists are beginning to make a coherent case that that is the wrong way to go about matters. "It's not as easy as saying: 'Take on some debt and everything will be fine.'"

One should not exaggerate the extent of Germany's break with the big-spending orthodoxy that has dominated thinking on the crisis in the United States. Germany *has* stimulated. This is the original "social market economy," after all, where high wages and lavish benefits were built out of vast society-wide deals between big labor and big business. The system broke down over the

THOMAS FLUHARTY

course of the 1980s and 1990s, as global competition rose and Germany lacked the resources to both cosset its workers and modernize the backward, ex-Communist economy of what had been East Germany. Wrenching—but highly successful—reforms were made to Germany's welfare system and labor markets in 2003 and 2004.

But Germany is still, relative to the United States, a kind of social-democratic paradise. The welfare state is still armed with many more programs that kick in in tough economic times and serve as "automatic stabilizers." Since 2003, these have become more sophisticated and flexible, and better adapted to a globalized economy. Wolfgang Clement, who served as what we would call the "czar" of economic reform under Social Democratic chancellor Gerhard Schröder, says

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that "these other instruments have been underestimated" in explaining why Germany is recovering from the downturn of 2008 and the United States is not. The system is already highly stimulative.

There is, for instance, *Kurzarbeit*, a sort of expanded earned-income tax credit. When big German firms are producing below capacity, rather than lay off workers permanently, they cut their hours and their pay, and the government covers much of the lost wages. In stimulative terms, this has helped a lot—it means that consumer spending has not dropped in Germany as much as it has in the United States. (Whether *Kurzarbeit* would suit the United States under any circumstances is another question. Probably not. A major justification for it in Germany is the looming demographic collapse mentioned above. German businesses are well aware that the next generation will see labor shortages, and that it might be impossible in a boom to find replacements for workers laid off in a bust.)

So when Obama administration officials urge Germans to stimulate, they are wrong, but not for the obvious reasons. It is not that they want to impose socialist programs on a capitalist system that is doing well without them. It is that they want to impose demand-stimulating programs on a system that is already absolutely glutted with them. It is as if the administration's approach were to take as a baseline whatever any given government happens to be spending, and then to insist that the figure should be, say, 10 percent of GDP higher. This is about as reasonable as assuming your child will be half as likely to get pneumonia if you send him off to school wearing two down parkas.

Germany is suggesting that maybe everyone ought to mind his own business and buy his own drinks.

On top of its automatic stabilizers, Germany has engaged in the sort of big, one-shot expenditures that we tend to associate with the word "stimulus." It spent 84 billion euros in the wake of the financial collapse. It has made its largest tax cuts in 16 years, according to government officials, which have been releasing 22 billion euros a year into the economy. What is more, German exports have been growing more slowly than imports, which results in an incidental "demand boost" to the global economy of $74 billion, according to Hans-Werner Sinn, the country's best-known budgetary economist.

Merkel made some concessions to the U.S. position after the Pittsburgh G-20 summit in 2009. But she urged ending any one-shot stimulus programs in a timely way. Two years seemed to her a good deadline for unraveling such programs, first the fiscal and then the monetary ones. German economists have defended her position. "When, if not now, should the state begin to save?" wrote Sinn over the summer. Like many Germans, Sinn is nervous about the effects of U.S. deficits on the global economy. Washington's promises of savings are vague, abstract, and deferred. Sinn believes the United States is merely "seeking allies for its own debt policies, which have surpassed any justifiable level." The U.S. budget deficit is 12.5 percent of GDP. Forty percent of the federal budget is being financed by borrowing, and most of that borrowing is being done abroad. "Where all this will lead to," Sinn writes, "heaven only knows."

As the world's second-largest exporter after China, Germany is more entangled with the fate of the world economy than any other country, possibly including China. One of the striking surprises in a visit to government offices in Berlin is the attention Germans are paying to the views of David Cameron, the new British prime minister, on the international economy. Cameron has surrounded himself with fiscal hawks. The government's recently published spending review calls for cutting the size of government by a seventh in the next five years.

Although he backed Gordon Brown's bank rescue plan in the immediate aftermath of the bank bailouts in 2008, Cameron, who is as widely read in economics as any Western leader, has an analytical objection to stimulus. It is that stimulus leaks. His understanding of our predicament seems to be roughly this: Some countries have current account deficits. That is, they import a lot more than they export, and cover the difference by borrowing money abroad. The current account deficits of the United States and the United Kingdom are spectacularly, dangerously large. Those deficits are a measure of the amount of credit that used to be sloshing around the U.S. economy. They helped crash the financial system, leaving people with less money to spend, which in turn threatens further economic contraction. To avoid that contraction, the government can stimulate, and if it does, people will keep buying things. But there is a problem: Why should their buying habits differ from the ones that got us into this mess in the first place? All you do by stimulating is prop up real estate prices at ultimately unsustainable levels and keep the flow of junky toys coming from China.

This, it seems, is the light in which Sinn and Germans in positions of power in Berlin understand the U.S. bullying on stimulus. Think of the global economy as a big, glitzy barroom. The Obama administration sold the stimulus (successfully) to Congress and (unsuccessfully) to the public at large as a way of getting us more drinks. But, in a global economy, what we are doing is standing rounds for the entire establishment. U.S. policymakers have come to realize that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

if other patrons don't start standing rounds, too, we're going to run out of money soon. Hence the tendency to cast the nonstimulators as a bunch of ungrateful jerks. Germany is suggesting a different view: Maybe everyone ought to mind his own business and buy his own drinks.

This is consistent with Germany's approach to its other big economic headache. Over the past year, the Greek government's creditworthiness has been blown down in a hurricane of political corruption scandals. Until a bailout plan was arrived at early this year, the fate of the common European currency, the euro, seemed to be in question. Germany has been a big beneficiary of the euro—its willingness to surrender its stable currency, the deutsche mark, allayed French worries about Germany's ambitions and made the country's reunification possible after 1990.

Germans see this. Still, they have been unwilling to turn the EU into a "transfer union" in order to prop up mismanaged countries like Greece, particularly after *Bild* and other German tabloids began describing how Greece allowed its workers to retire a decade earlier than German ones, and noted that the highest concentration of high-end Porsches in the world was to be found in Athens, supposedly broke and in need of German handouts. Merkel acceded to a package of loan guarantees after considerable arm-twisting by other European governments (and after Geithner called finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble, according to German sources, with the news that the Greek situation was making itself felt through a sell-off in U.S. bank stocks). But Germany continues to block every effort to create common European debt instruments, and to urge that any rescue plans be built around haircuts (losses for bondholders) rather than third-country bailouts.

Germany's economic dependence on exports has left it correspondingly entangled in multilateral institutions. But there has been a change in Germany's stance towards the world in the past half decade. For a half-century after World War II, Germany had to reestablish its credentials as a civilized country. This meant deferring to France on matters affecting Europe and deferring to the United States on matters affecting international security. But now Germany has been a pillar of good global citizenship for 65 years. The natural consequence is that Germany claims considerably more leeway to act in its own interest. We may regret the end of German docility, but we should not pretend to be mystified by it. In a sense, Barack Obama is relearning the lesson that George W. Bush learned in the run-up to the Iraq war in 2002 and 2003. Germany showed then that it would not support a war it didn't believe in just to show itself a nice guy. It is not going to bail out floundering foreign economies to show itself a nice guy, either. ♦

the weekly Standard

THE NEW!
weeklystandard.com
...take a look

We're taking advantage of the 24/7 news cycle by publishing more articles and commentary.

At weeklystandard.com you get more from Kristol and more from Barnes—more from just about everyone. Even more from The Scrapbook.

And you get the daily, cutting-edge work of our web team, led by John McCormack and elections expert Jay Cost.

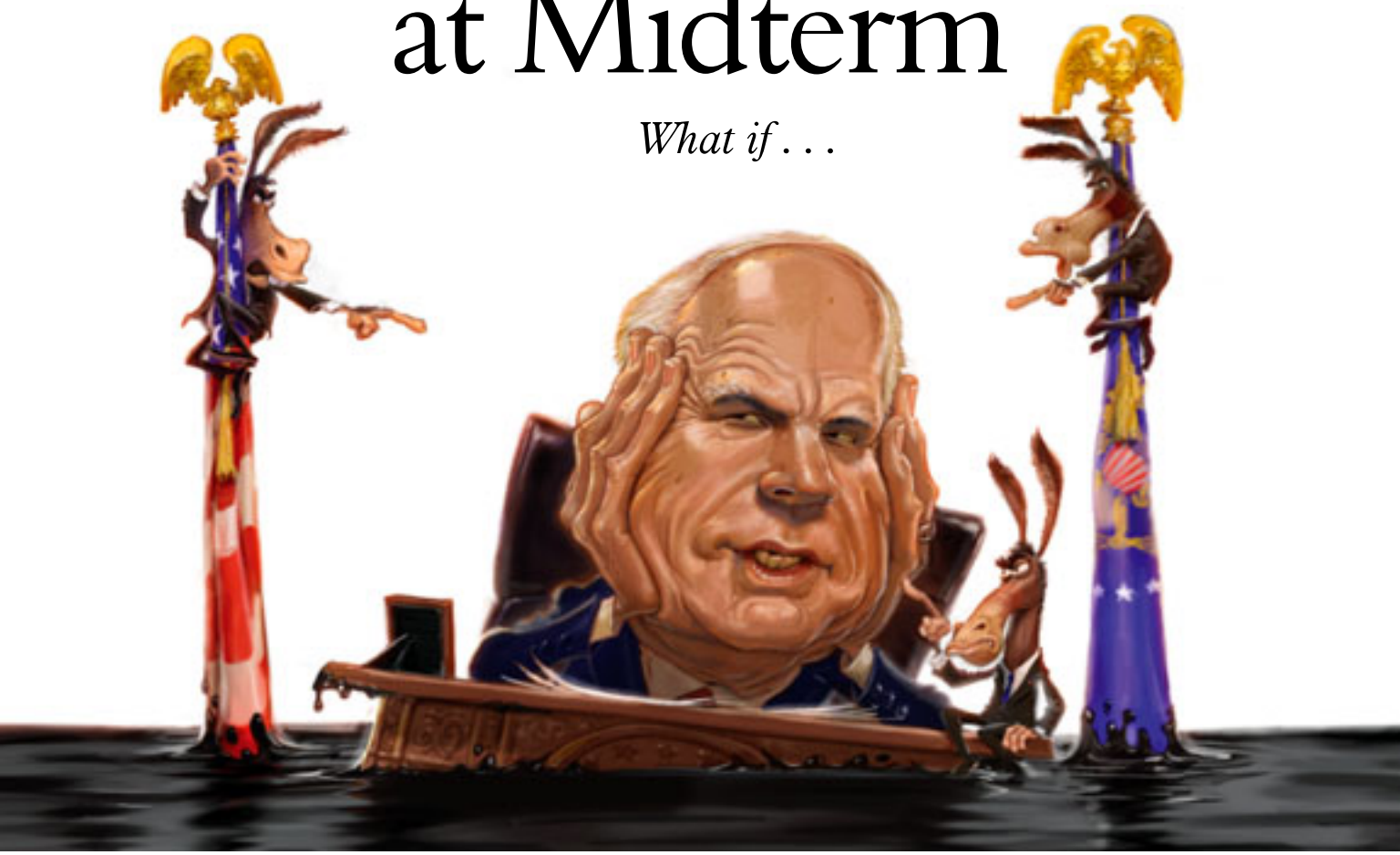
And note this: We've redesigned the site, adding new visual elements that make it a lot easier to get around and find what you want.

It's a page to bookmark: weeklystandard.com.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

President McCain at Midterm

What if . . .



GARY LOCKE

By Tod Lindberg

No, this is not going to be a full-blown exercise in the fiction genre of Alternative History: A minor adviser to the 2008 McCain presidential campaign chronicles the day-to-day ups and downs of the two eventful years following the American people's reluctant conclusion that they don't know a blessed thing about Barack Obama and want something a little more reliable than "hope and change." We'll leave that to Harry "*Guns of the South*" Turtledove—the master of the genre. While we will be engaging here in flagrant speculation, and though the claims we will make are accordingly beyond truth or falsehood, this is not fiction but rather an attempt to take what we know about American politics and ask what would have happened if, *mirabile dictu*, the 2008 election had gone the other way and John McCain were president of the United States today.

From the persistence and intensity of the Obama critique of the administration of George W. Bush, which began more than three years ago and continues unabated to this day, we can conclude that its devotees believe if Democrats had been in charge instead of W., everything, simply everything, would have been different and better. If you never open Guantánamo, you don't have to learn you can't close it. If you stay out of Iraq, Saddam Hussein is no problem, Afghanistan is handled, and Osama bin Laden is dead. Because you would have been regulating financial markets properly, their collapse wouldn't have imperiled the world economy. Because tax rates for the rich would never have been lowered, you wouldn't now have to call for raising

Contributing editor Tod Lindberg is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, and editor of Policy Review.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

them. (Okay, never mind that one.) In this cheerfully Manichean exercise, pure evil on the other side yields to pure good on yours, and everything works out for the best in this best of all possible worlds.

If one were proceeding in the same vein as Democrats have with Bush, one would claim that the BP Deepwater Horizon spill would never have happened during a McCain administration. Why not? It's simple. The McCain-Palin campaign commitment to "all of the above" on energy would have elevated the subject to the top of the domestic agenda, rather than the sub-basement to which the Obama administration consigned it along with other icky things. During a McCain administration, all parties, governmental and corporate, would accordingly be giving far more attention to their energy exploration efforts. BP would never have taken the shortcuts it did, and Deepwater Horizon would be pumping without incident.

But one shouldn't succumb to partisan histrionics. The spill would very likely have happened on McCain's watch (just as a Kerry administration would likely have faced a financial crisis). And Deepwater Horizon would have been an even bigger problem for a McCain administration than it was for Obama's, precisely because of the greater importance of energy to his policy agenda (remember GOP conventioneers chanting "Drill, Baby, Drill!"). Perhaps McCain would have responded more forcefully. It is his natural tendency to swing into action, where Obama's tendency is to be contemplative. But BP would have put a McCain presidency at risk.

So we need to keep a firm grip on the reality that when things turn out well, it is not solely because the good guys do things well, and when things turn out badly, it may not be because bad guys are in charge. Events loom large. Yet I do think a McCain administration would have been very different so far from the Obama administration—different in terms of policy choices and outcomes as well as political repercussions.

The first question that needs addressing is whether the U.S. economy would be performing any better had McCain been elected president. I think the answer is yes, but the reason is complicated. President McCain would surely have been willing to stimulate the economy in early 2009. It's true that as a senator, McCain voted against the legislation, but an important part of this exercise is to distinguish between what McCain has actually said and done as a senator and what he might have done as president.

Like most Republicans, Senator McCain didn't like the stimulus bill because of its vast payoffs to traditional Democratic constituencies, its shortage of tax relief in comparison to spending, and the extent to which the spending was misdirected and delayed. Yet those objectionable features were not inevitable but the product of a Democratic Congress interacting with a Democratic president.

The quite liberal House majority had the first crack and wrote quite liberal legislation. The Senate, though overwhelmingly Democratic, had a moderating influence on the total amount of spending but not on its character. The Obama White House would have been perfectly pleased with the House version but also seemed perfectly willing to accept the Senate version, meaning anything Congress could agree to was fine with Obama. Paul Krugman was jumping up and down on the *New York Times* op-ed page for a bigger package, but the political chances of this were zero. The Three-D House, Senate, and White House forged what amounted to a Democratic consensus on spending.

For our purposes, we will assume that McCain had no coattails and that President McCain would accordingly be doing business with the same Democratic House and Senate majorities Obama has. Even so, a Republican in the White House would have changed the outcome significantly. A McCain administration could have and would have insisted on a mix of spending and tax cuts.

The most likely form of the latter—because most politically palatable to the Democratic congressional majorities—would have been a package of tax breaks for small businesses. Some Republicans favored a Social Security tax holiday, but that would surely have been a deal-breaker for a House in which Nancy Pelosi was speaker. On the spending side, McCain would likely have sought to direct more toward infrastructure projects. With the housing sector at a standstill, adding construction jobs would arguably put underutilized capacity to more productive use. Another advantage of infrastructure projects is that under different circumstances they go by the name of "pork-barrel spending" and "earmarks." President McCain, based on his long record of opposition to spending of this kind, would have to take a dim view—unless given the opportunity to look the other way in the name of job-creating stimulus. Then, too, each piece of critical infrastructure would be in somebody's congressional district, which means that the pork barrel would be put to its traditional use in greasing the passage of the legislation. McCain would probably have had some success here, though the final legislation would surely have included some money for left-wing constituencies.

Some Republicans, it's true, would have opposed any stimulus spending; but it's likely that enough tax cuts would have been included to mute their opposition. One law of politics is this: Given the opportunity to stimulate, Washington stimulates. The legislation would have had significant bipartisan support and passed with large majorities.

Would it have done more than the legislation we got to stimulate the economy? Probably so, if only because of its indirect effects. Tax incentives for hiring workers and capi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tal investment would work to the usual extent that when you tax something less, you get more of it. And with a little bit of luck, some of the infrastructure spending might have had a longer-term benefit beyond the purely Keynesian proposition of paying Joe to dig a hole and Jane to fill it in. The broader meaning of the legislation, though, would have been its signal to Main Street that the political process was capable of responding with measures that have a real effect on the bottom line of small businesses. That was simply not the message of the Three-D stimulus. To the extent that small businesses have been hunkering down in its absence, it might have hastened the revival of their animal spirits.

What about big business? Here, one must confront the likelihood of a McCain bailout of the auto industry. The stars were aligned in favor of a bailout from the tail end of the Bush administration, and it strikes me as unlikely that President McCain would have hesitated. Bankruptcy for GM would have been too brutal for Washington to sit still for.

That said, the McCain bailout would not have been so lucrative for the United Auto Workers, and it is unlikely that it would have voided the privileged claims of bondholders. Conservative talk radio would have hated the bailout just as much, though, and it would have opened (or widened) a rift between McCain and the GOP base. Note, however, that the Bush administration left the bailout decision-making to the incoming administration. If McCain had been on-deck, the Bush administration (with behind-the-scenes encouragement from the McCain transition) might have been willing to take action on helping Detroit, thus assuming a part of the political burden.

Cash for clunkers? Probably not. One must congratulate the American people for responding rationally to a government offer to turn the worthless rusting pile of junk in their driveway into $4,500. But the sharp and temporary spike in sales in August 2009 came at a cost of $3 billion. Senator McCain himself was opposed to the initial $1 billion in cash for clunkers funding, which he found objectionable not only in principle but also for having been attached to legislation funding the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. McCain also led an abortive GOP effort to derail an additional $2 billion for the program, notwithstanding the clamor of more Americans with old cars to cash in—which was obligingly described in media reports as the program's "overwhelming popularity." The best way not to get overwhelmed by such popularity is not to dangle $4,500 under people's noses in the first place, as the McCain people would likely have concluded.

Cash for clunkers? One must congratulate the American people for responding rationally to a government offer to turn the worthless rusting pile of junk in their driveway into $4,500.

But cash for clunkers, for all its visibility, was hardly the biggest issue of economic and fiscal policy. There was the question of whether Ben Bernanke would get a second term as Fed chairman in a McCain administration—more likely than not, he would have, thanks to the argument that stability matters most in shaky economic times and McCain's instinct to align himself with the Washington establishment on issues about which he has no strong feelings. Unemployment benefits would likely have been extended. Democrats care deeply about the issue, and jobs were quite evidently scarce enough to vitiate concerns among economists (including Paul Krugman, back when he was an economist) that extending benefits would encourage people to stay on unemployment rather than earnestly seek work. A McCain administration might have succeeded—where GOP minority efforts during the Obama administration failed—in funding the extension out of unspent stimulus money.

By far the biggest economic policy issue on the McCain administration's horizon would be the fate of the Bush tax cuts, which are set to expire two months from now, since the Three-D government couldn't make up its mind what to do. A McCain administration, it makes sense to suppose, would have sought congressional action sooner and negotiated a compromise with the Democratic congressional leadership.

I assume President McCain would have sought to retain as much of the Bush tax cuts as possible and would have had the most leverage on his side of the argument while the economy was still weak—which is to say, it would have made sense for him to try to get Congress to tackle the issue in 2009. The Obama administration's incentives were the opposite: Hoping to implement a fairly large tax increase after the midterm election, they had good reason to postpone discussion of the expiring cuts until 2010, when they reckoned that the economy would be making a strong recovery.

What would the McCain compromise have looked like? The Obama campaign position—no tax increases for individuals making $200,000 or less or families at $250,000 or less—sets an obvious floor. If McCain had to give on top rates, he could surely have raised the floor. Maybe a new bracket 2 percentage points higher for those making over $1 million? There's also the Democratic obsession with the taxation of "carried interest" at lower capital gains rates rather than as ordinary income. They would probably have had their way with the hedge fund operators, for whom this represents a lucrative feature of the current tax code. The thrust of the legislation would have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been an extension of *most* of the Bush tax cuts, not all.

The question is whether McCain could get more breaks for, say, small businesses in order to offset the increases he would be forced to swallow. He would want that because the GOP base would be exceptionally unhappy to see him preside over a tax increase and would credit him very little if at all for making sure *most* of the cuts didn't lapse. I think he would get his offsetting cuts on the strength of the argument that coming out of a Great Recession is no time for a net tax increase. That pitch means nothing to liberal Democrats for whom every day is an excellent day for a tax increase, but it does tend to work well with the party's centrists. Nevertheless, the Republican base would have been extremely upset about the increase in top marginal rates.

The rest of the domestic policy agenda of the McCain administration at midterm would have as its most distinguishing feature a large void where Obamacare is today. No massive effort to reform health care would have been forthcoming from the McCain administration, and it is blindingly clear that no such thing ever could have advanced minus strong White House backing.

The absence of Obamacare would not only change the debate in the area of health policy but also with regard to the budget deficit and rapidly mounting national debt as a percentage of GDP. Everybody seems to know, in their heart of hearts, that broadening the ranks of the insured is going to cost more money, and that Obamacare does not "bend the curve" of health care costs down. Rather, it bends the curve upwards. Considerable uncertainty surrounds the question of how far up. This uncertainty is piled atop well-documented concerns about the long-term financing problems for Medicare and Social Security and the less discussed but rapidly growing disability and long-term care entitlements. A McCain administration would not likely have undertaken significant reform of these entitlement programs. But it would at least have avoided exacerbating the problem by some unknown multiple. How big a deficit is sustainable for how long, and how high the national debt can safely rise as a percentage of GDP, would still be big questions as the McCain administration approached the midterm elections, but they would be less urgent than they are under Obama.

Surely there would have been financial reform legislation; equally surely, it would not have been as bureaucracy-empowering. The new Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection at the Fed and Office of Financial Research at the Treasury are "solutions" to things that were not problems underlying the financial crisis, as my Hoover colleague John Taylor has argued, and reform of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which really were part of the problem, got kicked down the road. A McCain administration would likely have insisted on including Fannie and Freddie as a price of signing the legislation; such regulation was one of the key differences between Senator Chris Dodd's bill and the GOP alternative. Senate Republicans also sought unsuccessfully to include a provision that would have made underwriters put some of their own money at risk when deviating from regulatory standards in writing residential mortgage loans—essentially a market-based protection against writing stupid loans and dumping them downstream. Although the alternative GOP bill created most of the same new offices, it granted them less sweeping powers—and, more to the point, less discretionary authority and less authority in the form of implementing regulations that have yet to be written.

The *uncertainty* for businesses here and elsewhere is the heart of my claim that the economy would be performing better by now under a McCain administration. Many Republicans argue that Obama's policy choices are driving the economy downward. And indeed, those choices would not be my choices. But as Richard Fisher, the president of Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, has argued, the bigger problem is the amount of uncertainty under which the economy is laboring. In a July speech, he pointed to the Wall Street reform bill's 2,300 pages, 16 titles, and 38 subtitles, noting that in Title 1 alone, the Fed itself must or may promulgate regulations in nearly 20 areas, not counting requirements for Fed action in conjunction with other government agencies. The direction of fiscal policy, as noted, is highly unsettled. One might add the still largely unknown details of Obamacare's impact on businesses large and small and the question of whether Three-D Washington has much of a clue about how small businesses work and don't work. Cap and trade is dead, but until it died, it too was raising uncertainty about the prospect of substantial new taxes on businesses.

Washington is hardly the only source of uncertainty; the future intentions of American consumers are very much up in the air as well. Yet as Fisher noted, nonfarm, nonfinancial firms are sitting on $1.8 trillion in liquid assets and the banks have $1 trillion in excess reserves parked with Federal Reserve banks. With greater policy clarity from Washington, those assets could be driving a stronger, jobs-producing recovery.

The Obama administration has seen two Supreme Court vacancies. Would two of the Court's most liberal members have decided to retire with a GOP president in the White House? If not, they would probably have been doing the McCain administration a favor. Notwithstanding his pro-life voting record, McCain has a visceral distaste for social issues, and any battle over a Supreme Court nominee inevitably places those issues front and center. If President McCain tried to replace one of the Court's liberals with someone in the mold of Chief Justice John Roberts, it's doubtful the Democratic Senate would

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

vote to confirm what would amount to a major shift in the Court's balance. There would be a certain poetic justice in the retirement of the Court's decider-in-chief, swing vote Anthony Kennedy, in that the combination of a Republican president and an overwhelmingly Democratic Senate might be expected to produce a new swing vote—but that's on the assumption that there are still any potential justices out there who would be inclined to swing.

Would McCain have bucked mainstream sentiment in his party and reached out to Democrats to work on immigration reform? Certainly that would have been the inclination of the McCain of 2007. But his campaign-season promise to put enforcement first would have made for heavy going in working with Democrats. I am not sure what the McCain White House's response would have been had, say, New Mexico adopted the equivalent of Arizona's SB 1070 on illegal immigrants. Perhaps opposition to the measure as misguided—but nothing on the scale of the Obama administration's assault on the Arizona measure. But with SB 1070 coming out of President McCain's own state, it seems likely he would find it expedient not to make much of the issue at all. There would, however, be no reason to suppose he would voice support for it, as he had to do as an incumbent senator facing a primary challenge from the right this year.

It is inconceivable that the McCain Justice Department would have embraced the idea of trying Khalid Sheikh Mohammed in a U.S. courthouse in New York.

The McCain-Palin campaign emphasis on energy might or might not have borne any fruit by this point. The urgency associated with $4 a gallon gasoline in the summer of 2008 dissipated that fall as prices declined and then disappeared altogether under the bigger worries of the financial crisis and recession. President McCain would have done whatever was within his executive authority to promote drilling—with serious consequences when Deepwater Horizon blew. On the conservation side, the big-ticket possibility would have been a gasoline tax increase fully offset by tax reductions for individuals. It's hard to rate the chances of pulling off such a sensible reform as very high.

In the middle ground—or is it the bloody crossroads?—between domestic and foreign policy is the question of national security law. A McCain administration would have promised to close Guantánamo but would not have made the rash pledge to accomplish that objective within a year. A Republican administration would simply have been more sympathetic to warnings from its own lawyers that shuttering the facility would be extremely difficult. As for the actual closing, the congressional politics of transferring prisoners would have been no easier for McCain than for Obama, and the international politics of getting others to agree to accept prisoners might have been, if anything, harder, as McCain would have been on the receiving end of more criticism from abroad than Obama.

It is inconceivable, however, that the McCain Justice Department would have embraced the idea of trying Khalid Sheikh Mohammed in a U.S. courthouse in New York. It's also hard to imagine the cock-up surrounding the arrest of the would-be Christmas day bomber Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab under a McCain administration. McCain has substantial personal credibility on the issue of detainee treatment, thanks not only to his POW experience but also to his having been at odds on the issue with the Bush administration.

On the international scene, the fog of the global superstar Barack Obama obscures the fact that McCain has vast experience in foreign policy and is respected internationally, even by the GOP-fearing Europeans who are suspicious of what they see as the cowboy tendencies McCain would have in common with Bush. My line during the campaign as a foreign policy adviser to John McCain was that I didn't really have anything to do, since my candidate, unlike every other candidate in the race from both parties, didn't need any advice on foreign policy.

It's clear that winning in Iraq and Afghanistan would have been top priority for President McCain. We would have been spared the spectacle of conspicuous deliberation President Obama put on. In its place would have come a show of resolve, which the McCain administration would have regarded as useful to the war effort. The Afghanistan surge would have been unencumbered by the announcement of a proposed withdrawal schedule. The Obama administration has done a good job of keeping NATO and other allies in the fight. McCain has lengthy personal experience with NATO and European security matters, however, and though European disappointment over Obama's loss would have been acute, respect for McCain and for his commitment to both the war effort and NATO would have made a similar outcome achievable. "New Europe" especially loves McCain because of his support for NATO enlargement and his senatorial outspokenness in opposition to Russia's retrogression at home and its desire to dominate its "near-abroad." A McCain administration would also have continued the Bush plans for missile-defense deployments in Poland and the Czech Republic, providing reassurance where Obama's indelicate cancellation sowed confusion and uncertainty.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There would have been no "reset" with Russia under a McCain administration. On the contrary, McCain would have relished using the bully pulpit on such matters as the continuing Russian military presence in breakaway regions of Georgia and on the crackdown on NGOs in Russia proper. McCain has been a proponent of reduced reliance on nuclear weapons, but not out of the expectation that a display of U.S. restraint would be an inspiration to others. A "New START"-style arms control agreement would have been unlikely. It's fair to suppose that U.S. relations with Russia would be generally strained under McCain. Nor would Russia be the only instance, as McCain would be more outspoken in support of human rights and democracy from Venezuela to Burma to China.

McCain proposed creating a "League of Democracies" during the campaign. It's unlikely that the diplomacy entailed in creating such an organization would yet be bearing fruit, as the resistance to viewing the world through the prism of a common political system remains strong in places such as South Africa, India, and Brazil. But again, the bully pulpit of the American presidency is certainly something McCain would have put to use. President McCain would have spoken out early and forcefully in support of the Green movement in Iran and its peaceful protests against the fraudulent June 2009 presidential election. And he would have denounced the Iranian government's violent crackdown in no uncertain terms, unencumbered by illusions that he would be jeopardizing a deal with Tehran to end Iran's nuclear weapons program.

Stopping that program would almost certainly have been McCain's top priority apart from the wars. He has said repeatedly that the only thing worse than military action against Iran would be an Iran with nuclear weapons. He always sounds like he means it. The mullahs have been unresponsive to Obama's outreach. I doubt they would have been more responsive to McCain's stridency. Obama's sanctions are beginning to bite, as would McCain's, but if the regime doesn't change course, a military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities would seem to be inevitable. Of course, in late summer 2010, Washington was abuzz with rumors of an imminent Israeli strike—without U.S. participation (or, more plausibly, with covert U.S. support). A McCain administration would likely have concluded more emphatically that a nuclear-armed Iran is a threat to vital U.S. interests and would accordingly be less inclined to let Israel bear the entire burden of military action.

As for the aftermath, one should probably assume the worst under either Obama or McCain. Would the mullahs be more restrained in targeting U.S. interests because Israel carried out the strike without overt U.S. participation? Unlikely. In the better-case scenarios, say revolutionary conditions in Iran, McCain would provide moral and material support to the Green movement. I find it hard to believe that the Obama administration would still be offering engagement as a lifeline for the regime after an Israeli (or an American) strike, but the more I think about it, the less sure I am.

The Obama administration has taken a tough line with Israel, and especially with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, for whom there is very little sympathy to be found anywhere in the Democratic party. Where most Obama critics have detected only ham-handedness and an anti-Israel bias, I would allow room for the possibility of cunning: Losing sleep every night thinking about Iran and knowing that the United States would have to protect Israel (diplomatically and otherwise) following a military move, the Obama administration may have wanted to make a show of testy relations with Israel beforehand in order not to be seen as working hand-in-glove. It also seems that more security dialogue about Iran has been going on between Israel and its Sunni Arab neighbors than we have been briefed on, and this seems likely to have involved U.S. facilitation.

A McCain administration would have been very different in terms of atmospherics and substance. Call it the Elliott Abrams policy: Keep Israel close, because Israelis are most likely to moderate their own expectations when they feel more rather than less secure. Meanwhile, seek to buttress the ability of Abu Mazen and the PA to deliver tangible benefits to West Bank Palestinians. And don't expect too much.

These are the high-profile areas in which differences in approach between President Obama and President McCain could be expected to be most pronounced. There is always more bipartisan continuity in American foreign policy than people anticipate. That's a good sign, because it suggests that both sides of the partisan divide perceive the world they have to deal with similarly. Nevertheless, a consequential range of choices is available, and these are the most important things McCain would have done differently.

We come at last to the consequences for American politics of a McCain victory in 2008. Although I have made a case for McCain's greater success in dealing with the issue of chief importance to Americans, the economy, I don't think that even if the economy were growing at a 3 or 4 percent annual rate, and unemployment were below (say) 8 percent and declining, that would necessarily make McCain an especially popular president.

McCain might not have fallen by now as low as President Obama has. He certainly would not have fallen as far, since he would never have begun as high as Obama did, and expectations would have been lower. The tendency among Republicans to approve of Obama's handling of the job in his early days in office would not have been matched by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Democratic favor for President McCain. Democrats would have been too bitter about losing a race they thought they had in the bag.

Nevertheless, it's hard to see how McCain would be looking at anything better than break-even on job approval/disapproval. In the first place, even if the economy were doing better, it would not be roaring. Then, too, McCain and his senior officials would likely have committed bungles, made misstatements, and uttered major gaffes at about the same rate as all of their predecessors.

More broadly, Democrats would be united in their criticism of McCain. They would be denouncing him for the weakness of the recovery much as they denounced George W. Bush for the "jobless recovery" of his first term, and there would be a booming market for that line of attack. It is also hard to imagine support *among Democrats* for U.S. policy in Iraq and especially Afghanistan approaching the level it commands under Obama. More likely, congressional Democrats would have moved into near-unanimous rhetorical opposition to the war in Afghanistan on grounds of its supposed unwinnability. I doubt Democrats would be any more able or willing to pull closed the purse-strings for Afghanistan than they were for Iraq in 2007-08. But an "Afghan Study Group" would by now have issued a report counseling face-saving U.S. withdrawal, and McCain would be acting in defiance of an emerging establishment supermajority.

But if President McCain was thinking that the Democrats were a tough crowd, Lord knows what he'd be muttering under his breath about his fellow Republicans. The party's base has never been fond of McCain, and by now he would certainly have reminded many of them why. His need to do business with Democratic congressional majorities would alone whip up a reaction of anger. Add, say, a tax increase on top earners or an attempt to address immigration, and the combination would be explosive. Imagine the presidency of George H.W. Bush—with the tax-raising budget deal, passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and extension of the Civil Rights Act, but without the liberation of Kuwait. McCain would by now be surveying the conservative landscape and wondering what rough Pat Buchanan-type beast would be slouching to New Hampshire to haul in 38 percent of the GOP primary vote against him in 2012.

Most of the forces that brought the Tea Party to life would still be present during a McCain presidency: big bailouts, massive stimulus spending, high deficits, the expectation or reality of rising taxes. The big difference is that the Tea Party would not manifest itself as a massive anti-Democrat, anti-Obama wave that could carry Republicans to victory without them having to worry too much about their own internal divisions and uncertainty. Rather, the Tea Party would have taken shape as an insurgency within the Republican party. It would be directed against McCain and Republican leaders. It would be gathering as the main peril to McCain's prospects for reelection, and backing independent challengers to Democrats and Republicans in the midterms. It would be one of the main considerations driving McCain to ponder whether, turning 76 in August 2012, he would really want to run for a second term.

This brings us to the one character on the political landscape perhaps no less interesting in this 2010 hypothetical McCain administration than in current reality: Vice President Sarah Palin.

The first thing to note is that against the sum of all Democratic fear-mongering, McCain is still alive and well in 2010; Palin would not have been thrust unprepared into the Oval Office. And by now, presumably, she would be well-briefed and fluid in her discussion of policy topics, though perhaps prone to colloquialisms and neologisms that would come back to haunt her.

Would she be a second coming of Dan "P-o-t-a-t-o-e" Quayle, who never recovered from the initial impressions of him as a lightweight? There were, of course, calls on Bush 41 to dump Quayle from the ticket in 1992—not that doing so would have helped Bush in any obvious way; indeed, it would only have antagonized conservatives further. But Palin is Quayle-squared: She is a political phenomenon, polarizing and galvanic, capable of drawing and exciting a crowd as well as becoming a totemic object of fear and loathing for her opponents. It likely would have fallen to Palin to keep conservative Republicans from eating McCain alive, and if anyone could, she would have pulled it off.

A Vice President Palin would be an even more fascinating figure in calculations of the future of the GOP than she is as an outsider phenomenon. We certainly know enough about her to say that she would not willingly retreat from the limelight, as Quayle mostly did after leaving office, only to reemerge in 1999 in a short-lived bid for the GOP presidential election and discover that there were insufficient reservoirs of goodwill toward him on which he could draw to make a comeback. Come what may, Sarah Palin would remain where she thinks a mama grizzly belongs, namely, in your face.

No, I will not conclude this scenario with McCain deciding not to seek reelection and Palin emerging as the 2012 GOP frontrunner—although I do hope Harry Turtledove runs with that plot line. I'd like to read it, even though it won't be right. Of course McCain would run for reelection—when McCain goes down, he will go down swinging.

And to all those who, in my scenario, sport bumper stickers saying "Don't Blame Me, I Voted for Obama," I say: Don't blame me, I voted for McCain. ♦

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ADVERTISEMENT

There is one aspect of life that ***unites***, ***controls***, and ***affects*** all people. That one aspect of life is the collection of ***natural laws***. They ***unite***, ***control***, and ***affect*** human life no matter what people's race, gender, or creed or where on this planet they live. Consider that ***whoever or whatever*** created the laws of physics also created another law to ***unite***, ***control***, and ***affect*** people's relationships with one another.

Richard W. Wetherill
1906-1989

The problem being addressed here relates to the fact that people unknowingly ***unite*** against one another and seek a kind of ***control*** that ***affects*** not only their health and well-being but culminates in death.

If you are a new reader of this subject matter, be prepared for a pleasant shock.

Whoever or whatever is the creator revealed ***nature's law of right action*** to the mind of Richard W. Wetherill in 1929. The law calls for people to be ***rational*** and ***honest*** not only regarding the laws of physics but also to be ***rational*** and ***honest*** in their thinking and behavior toward one another.

After decades of rejection, the behavioral law is as viable and effective as when created, whereas people's behavior, in general, has been becoming more and more blatantly irrational and dishonest.

Despite the fact that compliance to every law of physics requires its specific right action to succeed, people's behavior toward one another, whether noble or ignoble, was deemed to be a matter of personal choice.

Wetherill used words to describe the elements of nature's law of behavior such as rational, logical, honest, appropriate, moral, and true to the facts, and he also cautioned that the law, itself, is the final arbiter of what is ***right behavior***. The formula states: ***Right action gets right results whether it relates to laws of physics or the law of behavior, whereas wrong results in either case indicate failure properly to comply***.

There is one requirement of the behavioral law that people need to give careful attention. Rational and honest responses in their relationships with one another must be made specifically to ***satisfy the law*** and not to satisfy their particular expectations.

Ordinarily people conduct their relationships to satisfy their purposes, none of which qualify according to natural law. Such behavior, however, does explain why the earth's population is not being peacefully ***united***, ***controlled***, nor favorably ***affected***.

Do people intentionally refuse to accommodate the requirements of gravity for instance? No, they do their best to keep their balance or recover it when needed.

Behavioral responses require that same attitude. Do not act for personal reasons; act because a self-enforcing natural law requires people's ***obedience***.

Those who are familiar with the accounts of creation in scriptures will realize that the first wrong act of the created beings was to ***disobey***. That wrong behavior ended the perfect situation that had existed, and it brought about the predicted wrong results.

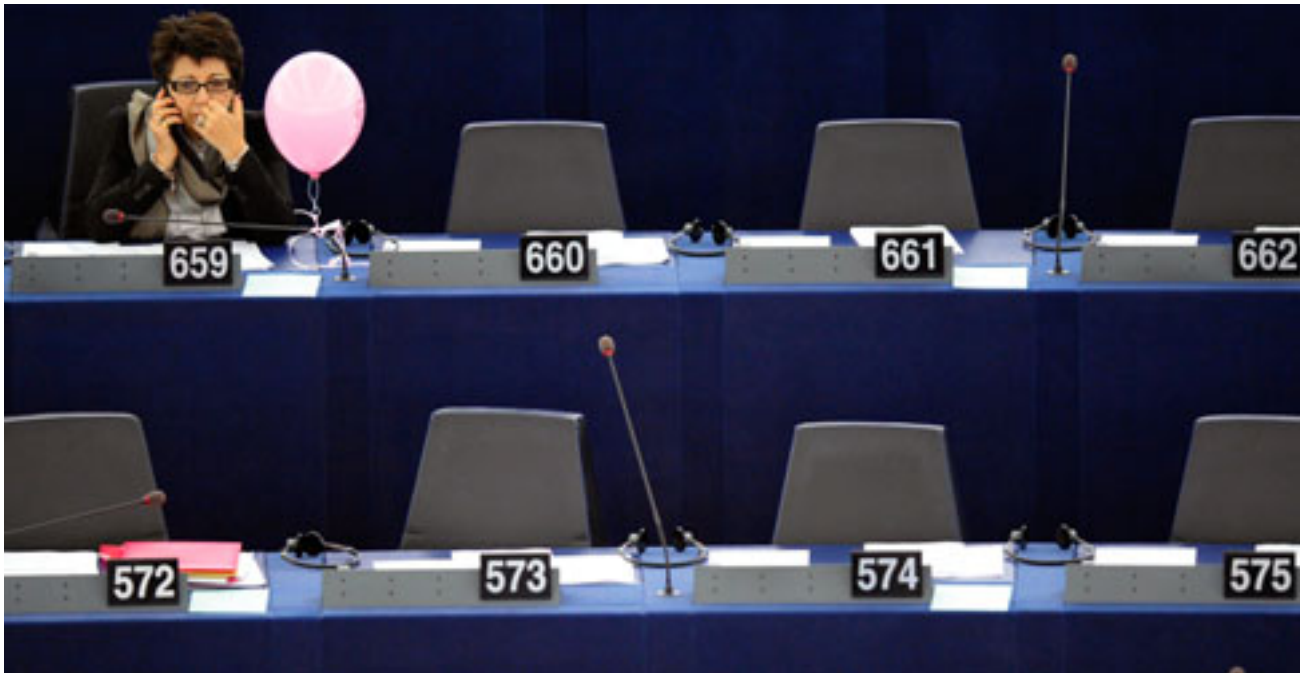
Whether those accounts are actual or symbolic, they illustrate the problem.

For ages whoever or whatever is the creator allowed people to control their behavior and suffer the resulting troublesome problems but also created a natural law of behavior that when identified and obeyed unites people, allowing them to enjoy the benefits that then control and affect their lives.

Visit our colorful Website www.alphapub.com where several natural-law essays and seven books describe the changes called for by whoever or whatever created nature's behavioral law. The material can be read, downloaded, and/or printed FREE.

This public-service message is from a self-financed, nonprofit group of former students of Mr. Wetherill. Please help by directing others to our Website. For more information write to: The Alpha Publishing House, PO Box 255, Royersford, PA 19468.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



European Union debate on maternity and paternity leave, Strasbourg, Oct. 20, 2010

FREDERICK FLORIN / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

It Can Happen Here

American government goes European

BY ROGER KIMBALL

In September I was part of a conference in England on the subject of "The Anglosphere and the Future of Liberty." Just before I introduced our dinner speaker, the British politician and journalist Daniel Hannan, a friend handed me a finely printed card which read, "Socialism: It's not just for Europeans any more."

Oh, the shattering simplicity of the perfectly obvious! Hannan's remarks, as it happens, dilated on this sorrowful theme: how America was becoming more and more like contemporary Europe, and why this was a bad thing. This is also the theme of his short, lively, polemical, and irresistible book.

Roger Kimball, editor of The New Criterion, *is the author of the forthcoming* Much Ado About Noting: A Pedographophilic Chrestomathy of Sly, Admonitory, Informative, Scurrilous, and Amusing Observations from the Bottom of the Page.

The New Road to Serfdom
A Letter of Warning to America
by Daniel Hannan
HarperCollins, 224 pp., $24.99

Buy it. Read it. It will probably make you angry. It will certainly make you better informed about what is happening to America. And like the book from which it takes its title, F.A. Hayek's 1944 masterpiece, *The Road to Serfdom*, Hannan's book is essential intellectual equipment for Tea Partiers everywhere. If you cherish freedom and value independence and self-reliance, you will like this book. If you value security above all else, and look to government to take care of you, you will be frightened by it. *The New Road to Serfdom* is in equal parts a paean to ordered liberty and an admonition against the snares of central planning and rule by cadres of self-perpetuating elites. Europe has gone down that road with baleful results for freedom and prosperity that Hannan outlines but that are still ill-appreciated on this side of the Atlantic.

When it comes to the European Union, Hannan knows whereof he speaks. For the last 11 years he has been a member of the European Parliament for Southeast England for the Conservative party. He has watched with dismay as political power and sovereignty have drained away from the 27 member states and have been invested in Brussels. In dismay, but not in silent dismay. In a series of coruscatingly brilliant speeches (many of which are freely available on the Internet: Google is your friend), he has stood up for freedom, local prerogatives, and fiscal prudence and against their statist alternatives. Cato the Elder was in the habit of ending his speeches with the imperative: "*Carthago delenda est*." (Carthage must be destroyed.) Hannan has deployed a similarly tonic use of the gerundive at the conclusion of his own speeches: "*Pactio Olisipiensis*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

censenda est." (The Lisbon Treaty must be put to a vote.)

The Lisbon Treaty, aka the European Constitution, the 78,000-word behemoth (the U.S. Constitution, with all of its Amendments, is but 7,200 words) that was to bind all of Europe into a single, smoke-free, low-carbon, egalitarian, nonsexist, emolliently progressive utopia, in which everything from the right to a job to the right to "good administration" (!) is guaranteed in writing. The American Constitution, as Hannan notes, is mainly about the liberty of the individual and limiting state power. The Lisbon Treaty, despite its rhetoric, is mainly about explaining the power of the state. But wait! Daniel Hannan asks that the Lisbon Treaty be put to a vote. But wasn't it already put to the people for a vote? Why yes, repeatedly—and each time they voted it down, by a substantial margin. Exasperated, the bureaucrats who now run Europe, and who appoint one another and are therefore essentially beyond the reach of the voters, simply adopted it, after taking the precaution of having a team of lawyers render it (as Valéry Giscard d'Estaing cheerfully acknowledged) "unreadable." (A Pelosi moment, that: "We have to pass the [health care] bill so that you can find out what is in it.")

Daniel Hannan has not liked what he has witnessed unfolding on the continent. Unelected—and, if I may so put it, un-unelectable—officials now run the show. They decide everything from fiscal policy to what sort of light bulbs you may use to how much the bananas you import may deviate from the perpendicular. (You think I am making this up; I am not.) "Who can seriously doubt," Hayek asked,

> That the power which a multiple millionaire, who may be my neighbor and perhaps my employer, has over me is very much less than that which the smallest *fonctionnaire* possesses who wields the coercive power of the state and on whose discretion it depends whether and how I am to be allowed to live or to work?

In November 2009, the first president of the European Union, the Belgian Herman van Rompuy, declared the "first year of global governance." On what authority did van Rompuy issue his declaration? Best not to inquire. Hannan quotes a pertinent observation from Edward Gibbon: The fact that there are many independent states, Gibbon noted in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, has "most beneficial consequences to the liberty of mankind" because it limits a tyrant's reach. The protestant in Louis XIV's France, for example, had somewhere to flee to because Louis's jurisdiction was limited. And what now, that the age of "global governance" has begun? And who are these new mandarins who find themselves at the helm of the EU?

Consider Catherine Ashton—that's Baroness Ashton to you and me since Tony Blair ennobled her with a life peerage. She's the EU's first foreign minister. No, that's not quite right: Only sovereign countries have foreign ministers. Entities like the EU have grander-sounding nabobs. When Baroness Ashton took office in December 2009 she gloried in the Mikado-like title of "High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy." It's a bit like Seth with The Tank in *Black Mischief*. What had Baroness Ashton done to merit this awesome responsibility? Well, she'd worked for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Then she sat on the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work. Then she was with the Health Authority in Hertfordshire and served as vice president of the National Council for One-Parent Families. According to Hannan, she has never faced the voters, but she is the EU's Lord High Everything Else.

The EU, Hannan writes, presents "a depressing example of what the United States might turn into: a federation that is prepared to sacrifice prosperity for the sake of uniformity." Until recently, the United States offered a pretty clear alternative to Europe. We had been used to electing the people who led us—and unelecting them if they didn't please us. We favored, at least in theory, small government, preferred local initiatives to centralized solutions, and took self-reliance, not the size of the welfare budget, as an index of society's health. We read and approved James Madison's observation, in *Federalist* 45, that the powers delegated by the Constitution to the federal government were "few and defined"—having to do mostly with "external objects" like war, peace, and foreign commerce—while the powers delegated to the individual states were "numerous and indefinite," extending to "all the objects which, in the ordinary course of affairs, concern the lives, liberties, and properties of the people, and the internal order, improvement, and prosperity of the State." Indeed, to a large extent, the United States has until recently governed itself like "a confederation of statelets, allowing substantial autonomy to its constituent parts."

The New Road to Serfdom sports some memorable epigraphs from such folks as John Winthrop, James Madison, and Hannan's hero, Thomas Jefferson. I particularly liked Jefferson's enumeration, in 1800, of America's many "blessings": its secure position between two oceans, its size, its natural resources. What else was necessary to make us "a happy and a prosperous people?" Jefferson writes:

> A wise and frugal Government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned.

Jefferson's commendation put me in mind of an epigraph, from David Hume, that Hayek used at the front of the original *Road to Serfdom*: "It is seldom that liberty of any kind is lost all at once." America's drift towards socialism—towards bigger government, higher taxes, increasing centralization, more intrusive bureaucracy—has been gathering force for many decades. One important marker came in 1913 with the Sixteenth Amendment. Consider the text: "Congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes on incomes, from whatever source derived, with apportionment among the several States, and without regard to any census or enumeration." Today, of course, we take the income

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tax for granted. Death and taxes: Are they not the inevitable evils? Perhaps. But Hannan is right that the Sixteenth Amendment "revolutionized" the relation between federal power and the states. It would, as he says, have "horrified" Jefferson—indeed, it would have horrified all the Founders, whose care to preserve states' rights was a critical "auxiliary precaution" to support freedom.

I do not advise bringing up the legitimacy of the Sixteenth Amendment in serious conversation; there are some issues that are simply off-limits in polite company. It is nonetheless worth reflecting on what a privilege it is to be in the position of deciding which issues are "dead causes" and which are okay to broach. How about Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal? For many years that, too, was off limits. But the advent of Barack Obama has had the curious stereoscopic effect of making FDR's legacy both more subject to scrutiny and criticism and more sacrosanct. Hannan is clearly skeptical, and he makes the provocative observation that "most disastrous policies have been introduced at times of emergency."

> New Deal Democrats, like many elected representatives today, were in the grip of one of the most dangerous of political fallacies: the idea that, at a time of crisis, the government's response must be proportionate to the degree of public anxiety. "Doing nothing is not an option!" intone politicians. . . . Doing nothing is always an option, and often it is the best option.

Indeed. For Rahm Emanuel, "You never want a serious crisis to go to waste" when you can milk it to increase government control. But then there was Calvin Coolidge, perhaps America's most underrated president, who (among others) is credited with commanding a busybody aide: "Don't just do something; stand there!" (I cannot find the source, but I urge you to ponder the wisdom of Coolidge's advice.) The point is that it is far easier to establish than to rid oneself of any bureaucracy, and of all mankind's bureaucracies, the hardest to kill are government bureaucracies. (Still, while there is life there is hope: Coolidge did manage to reduce the size of the federal budget by some 50 percent.)

When the economic crisis broke in the fall of 2008, the United States and Great Britain were among the quickest off the mark to spend more, borrow more, and impose a raft of new regulation. In late October 2008 then-candidate Barack Obama stood before a cheering throng and told them that they were only five days away from "fundamentally transforming the United States of America." As the past two years have shown, he wasn't kidding; that wasn't hustings hyperbole but a forthright plan of action. In the past months Obama has expanded the size of the federal government by a third (by some estimates), has spent trillions—*trillions*—of dollars, and has, under the rubric of health care "reform," put nearly 20 percent of the American economy under the control of Washington. Instead of exuding confidence about his own country, he has jetted around the world, arrogantly apologizing for America's past "arrogance" to bewildered tyrants and heads of state. Meanwhile, he has effectively jettisoned the Republican-sponsored welfare reforms that Bill Clinton signed into law, quietly reassuming federal control over welfare spending. (Another tidbit from Jefferson: "To preserve our independence, we must not let our rulers load us with perpetual debt. We must make our election between economy and liberty, or profusion and servitude.")

Friedrich von Hayek, ca. 1940

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

In the past, I have often wondered why people, whether in Europe or the United States, put up with the promiscuous indignities of quasi-socialist rule. Why didn't they fight back? I put it down mostly to something Hayek described as one of the "main points" of his argument in *The Road to Serfdom*: that one of the most important changes that extensive government control brought in its wake was

> a psychological change, an alteration of the character of the people. . . . The important point is that the political ideals of a people and its attitude toward authority are as much the effect as the cause of the political institutions under which it lives.

Such a change, Hayek acknowledged, was not easily demonstrated, but it could be clearly felt. It did not arise all at once but might take "perhaps . . . one or two generations" to flower fully. It was all, I thought to myself, part of what Alexis de Tocqueville meant in those famous passages about "Democratic Despotism" in *Democracy in America*. No wonder Hayek had taken his title from Tocqueville: The description of how despotism in a democracy tended to infantilize men rather than tyrannize them as did despotisms of old seemed exactly right. Its power, said Tocqueville,

> extends its arms over society as a whole; it covers its surface with a network of small, complicated, painstaking, uniform rules through which the most original minds and the most vigorous souls cannot clear a way to surpass the crowd; it does not break wills, but it softens them, bends them, and directs them; it rarely forces one to act, but it constantly opposes itself to one's acting; it does not destroy, it prevents things from being born; it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> does not tyrannize, it hinders, compromises, enervates, extinguishes, dazes, and finally reduces each nation to being nothing more than a herd of timid and industrious animals of which the government is the shepherd.

I had concluded that something like Tocqueville's analysis explained the quiescence of the citizenry in Europe and America when faced with the progress of socialism. As Hilaire Belloc put it, "The effect of Socialist doctrine on Capitalist society is to produce a third thing different from either of its two begetters—to wit, the Servile State."

Here we were, then. Or were we? In the immediate aftermath of the economic *dégringolade* in 2008, the United States experienced a veritable tsunami of government expansion. "Taxation, expenditure, and borrowing were all rising exponentially," Hannan observes. "Federal officials were presuming to tell private firms how to operate, even what to pay their employees. And, most shocking of all, the entire nation appeared to be going along with the new dispensation."

But appearances were deceiving. The clerks were going along with it. (Many observers would refer here to the "elites," but "elites" is not quite right; "clerks," as in "*trahison des clercs*," is closer to the reality.) Those with their lips sewn to the government teat went along, as did the left-leaning commentariat. But the rest of the populace? The bumper sticker advising that "It's a good thing Obama doesn't know what comes after trillion" told you something. As did, for example, the Rasmussen poll revealing that only 21 percent of Americans approved of bailing out General Motors, which forever more will be scornfully known as "Government Motors." Calls to "man up" were suddenly being heard across the land. Someone had miscalculated, and miscalculated badly.

I write this during the run-up to an election that, if the signs and portents are at all accurate, will be a disaster for—well, I was going to say "for the Democrats," but it will be a disaster for all those politicians, be they Republican or Democrat, who have forsaken the Founders' wisdom that discerned the unbreakable link between limited government and freedom. Hannan quotes a marvelous passage from Edmund Burke:

> Because half a dozen grasshoppers under a fern make the field ring with their importunate chink, whilst thousands of great cattle, reposed beneath the shade of the British oak, chew the cud and are silent, pray do not imagine that those who make the noise are the only inhabitants of the field; that, of course, they are many in number; or that, after all, they are other than the little, shriveled, meager, hopping, though loud and troublesome, insects of the hour.

"Clerks" is better than "elites," but better than both is the image of those little, shriveled, meager, hopping "insects of the hour" that Burke apostrophizes. Insects, beware: This election is only the beginning. ♦

B&A

Future Guy

Clay Shirky has perfected the art of the bold, meaningless epigram. **BY JONATHAN V. LAST**

Clay Shirky is the Internet's most prominent ponderer. He teaches "Interactive Telecommunications" at New York University's Tisch School, and when he isn't teaching, he's often speaking, on television and radio shows and podcasts, in speeches at technology conferences. He's a bestselling author: *Here Comes Everybody* (2008) was translated into Dutch, Korean, Portuguese, and Chinese. He writes for *Wired* and various technology publications, and is often referenced by their reporters. Every six weeks or so the *New York Times* quotes Shirky in stories with headlines such as "Why Twitter Will Endure" or "Google Searches for a Foreign Policy." Here, for instance, is Shirky in October 2008, explaining to *Times* readers the structural challenges facing newspapers: "The auto industry and the print industry have essentially the same problem. The older customers like the older products and the new customers like the new ones."

Cognitive Surplus
Creativity and Generosity in a Connected Age
by Clay Shirky
Penguin, 256 pp., $25.95

Of course, the auto industry and the print industry are not facing anything like the same problems. Newspapers are suffering because (1) circulation eroded somewhat as readers shifted to online versions of the print product; (2) classified advertising moved to free websites while major ad sales cratered during the recession; and most important, (3) many publishers are saddled with gargantuan debt loads from a spree of expensive newspaper acquisitions in the late '90s and early 21st century. The auto industry, on the other hand, faces no structural problems: There is no new alternative to the automobile. Car sales declined two years ago because gas prices rose steeply while the economy sputtered. As gas prices eased, sales rebounded. Once the recession ends, the auto market will look much as it did before.

But Shirkyisms—the koans that form his primary mode of communication—aren't designed to be unpacked. In books, interviews, and speeches, Shirky's epigrams are meant simultaneously to dazzle and soothe. To witness a Shirkyism ("The Internet is the first public medium to have post-Gutenberg economics" or "Institutions will try to preserve the problem to which they are the solution") is to be confronted with insights that sound elegantly clever, yet never quite make sense. "Media is

Jonathan V. Last is a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the connective tissue of society," he'll say. Another time he'll warn that "No medium has ever survived the indifference of 25-year-olds." Really? Not opera or theater or oil-on-canvas or the novel?

Yet it's not quite fair to hold Shirkyisms to any standard of coherence. Because Clay Shirky isn't an academic or a public intellectual. He's a guru. And as you might expect Shirkyisms form the backbone—or maybe the connective tissue—of *Cognitive Surplus: Creativity and Generosity in a Connected Age*, where he argues that social networking (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) will change the world in wonderful ways.

Shirky's thinking runs like this: Two billion people are now online. Right now most of those people spend their free time watching television. As television watching (which is bad) is replaced by Internet surfing (which is good) people will combine to create worthwhile virtual projects that become civic capital. Shirky's Exhibit A is Wikipedia, the estimable online encyclopedia created and maintained by an army of volunteers. Shirky estimates that, to date, Wikipedia has consumed 100 million man-hours of work. By contrast, Americans watch 200 billion hours of television a year. As those hours shift to the Internet, people will band together into working groups and create worthwhile endeavors out of this "cognitive surplus."

Or as the Shirkyism goes: "The harnessing of our cognitive surplus allows people to behave in increasingly generous, public, and social ways, relative to their old status as consumers and couch potatoes." Because "the radius and half-life of shared effort have moved from household to global scale." All thanks to Facebook.

That's not entirely fair: Shirky means so much more than Facebook. *Cognitive Surplus* references roughly a dozen websites which Shirky marks as the best fruits of our digital labors. There's Ushahidi, an African site which tracks tribal violence in real-time. Couchsurfing.org helps people who don't want to pay for hotels find volunteer hosts willing to let them sleep in their living room. The site patientslikeme.com connects people suffering from the same diseases to one another so they can share information and personal stories.

Shirky allows that some folks squander their cognitive surplus on lesser pursuits. The Internet is stuffed with user-generated juvenilia, such as "lolcats"—where people Photoshop pictures of cats with funny captions—and "fan fiction," where people write stories about existing fictional characters. (The site fanfiction.net alone has nearly 500,000 stories based on the Harry Potter franchise.) But Shirky defends even these efforts: "The stupidest possible creative act," he insists, "is still a creative act."

Clay Shirky, 2006

JAMES DUNCAN DAVIDSON / O'REILLY MEDIA, INC.

It makes sense that Shirky would celebrate creativity in all its forms. He was a fine arts major at Yale, and before he became an Internet guru, he ran an experimental theater group in New York. But he has practical, as well as philosophical, reasons for prizing creativity: namely, that it's what his audience wants to hear.

In that way, *Cognitive Surplus* is very much a middle-management business book, always looking to challenge readers (but not too much), confronting them with hard truths that they're secretly dying to hear. Like all good business books, it has a certain paint-by-numbers structure. Reference to *Harvard Business Review* essays? Check. Heavy leaning on behavioral economics? Check. Discussion of social psychology experiments? Check. Anecdotes from a nonthreatening countercultural touchstone and story wherein a guileless child provides a stunning philosophical insight? Done and done.

Cognitive Surplus also has the requisite glancing reference to hard science, to give the book a patina of seriousness. For instance, Shirky argues that it is the mass of people on social networks which causes them to behave differently from small, real-world groups: "In the words of the physicist Philip Anderson," Shirky says, "'more is different.'" And who could argue with a real, honest-to-blog physicist? Well, Philip Anderson might. Because when Anderson wrote his paper "More Is Different"—in 1972—he wasn't talking about the Internet or group dynamics or social phenomena but about particle physics. What's more, his paper was written in response to what he saw as a fundamental problem in science: people from one discipline trying to superimpose their conceptual frameworks on unrelated disciplines. "Psychology is not applied biology. Nor is biology applied chemistry," he emphasized. Nor, one might add, is particle physics social network theory.

Be that as it may, a difference in scale might really create a difference in kind when it comes to social networks. But Shirky never bothers to take this misappropriated notion seriously. Let's suppose that the size of a social network really does transform its potential. Might the scale of the Internet cause transformations that are less beneficial? Is it possible that having, say, two billion self-publishers risks such an avalanche of output that it becomes hard to differentiate the good from the silly, thereby lowering the standard of middlebrow discourse? Shirky dispenses with this concern in a few brief sentences: "There have always been people willing to argue that an increase in freedom to publish isn't worth the decrease in average quality," he says dismissively. A moment later he claims that the ability to self-publish "has value, indeed, *because* there is no way to filter for quality in advance." And that settles that.

Shirky does a lot of arguing by fiat. He recently told an interviewer, "I've always understood that [the Internet]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is a set of trade-offs. So for all the normalization of, say, pedophilia, we also get young, small-town kids growing up gay who now know they're not abnormal. And it seems to me that the net trade-off of lessening society's ability to project a sense of normal that no one actually lives up to is a good thing."

That's a staggeringly provincial argument, but provincialism marks a good deal of Shirky's work. Not only can he not imagine a world outside of urban techno-hipsterism—he often can't imagine a world that existed the week before yesterday. For instance, he talks about television's unique role as an opiate of the masses as if the radio had never been invented. He goes on at length about amateurism—the idea that nonprofessionals can make lasting contributions—as though it were an entirely new phenomenon. But the amateur adventurer, writer, and intellectual are not historical inventions sprung from Usenet groups. (To take just the most obvious example, Victorian Britain—which created much of the modern world—was powered, in large part, by aristocratic amateurs. Large chunks of the globe, for instance, were mapped by "amateur" explorers from the Royal Geographical Society.)

Shirky also fails to understand the moral ambiguity of technology. He spends time with a Pakistani group called Responsible Citizens, which harnessed the power of the web to motivate disaffected Pakistanis to pick up litter and be more civic-minded. He views the group as one of social networking's great success stories and cautions optimistically, "It's too soon to handicap the long-term effects of the Responsible Citizens, but without social contagion, their task would be hopeless." The problem is that Pakistan is on the brink of a very different kind of social transformation these days, and in no small part because the folks on the other side use the Internet, too.

For example, the terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba (it carried out the Mumbai bombings in 2008) long kept a website through its parent organization, Jamaat-ud-Dawa. The site was used to create a virtual community for terrorists, allowing them to instruct newcomers, preach to sympathizers, and circulate propaganda for a global audience. (Before Jamaat-ud-Dawa was also declared a terrorist group in 2008 its website was hosted by a company in San Francisco.) Five Americans were arrested in Pakistan in 2009 while training to carry out terror attacks. Their radicalization was also the result of social networking with Pakistani terrorist recruiters. And Shirky can't claim ignorance about the confrontation of jihad and Western civilization: In a recent interview he boasted that the only TV news network he watches is al Jazeera.

Shirky never allows that social networking is used for both liberal and illiberal ends. Instead, he confronts skepticism about the technology's civilizational worth with a Shirkyism: "Upgrading one's imagination about what is possible is always a leap of faith."

It may be unfair to judge Shirky by the printed word because, like all good gurus, he bases much of his appeal on the presentation. Watch his most recent TED address (from this past June), and you'll see a master performer. Shirky struts around the stage like an antimatter Tom Wolfe: bald, in a sleek, black suit, white shirt buttoned all the way up, no tie. His certitude is awesome to behold. One former student describes his presence thus: "You sit in his class for an hour, and you feel like a superstar, like you can understand things in a much clearer way." Or as a reporter put it in the course of an admiring profile, Shirky speaks with "such authority that were he to tell you the sun actually sets in the east, you might almost believe him."

And at the end of the day, it's all about belief. Not long ago Shirky was explaining to the *Guardian* why it's important for people to pay attention to tech gurus: "If we took the loopiest, most moonbeam-addled Californian utopian Internet bulls—t," he said, "and held it up against the most cynical, realpolitik-inflected skepticism, the Californian bulls—t would still be a better predictor of the future." That's not true either, of course. But it's a great line. ♦

B&A

The Parent Trap

A sesquicentennial for the father of Peter Pan.

BY DAWN EDEN

'All children, except one, grow up," wrote J.M. Barrie, and Dr. Dan Kiley, despite his self-identification with the eternal boy of Barrie's fiction, was no exception.

Kiley, a psychologist, died of a heart attack at age 54 in 1996, 13 years after hitting the bestseller lists with *The Peter Pan Syndrome: Men Who Have Never Grown Up*. The *New York Times* obituary noted that, while *The Peter Pan Syndrome* "dovetailed with a widespread feminist view of relations between the sexes," the author's next effort, *The Wendy Dilemma*, failed to capture the zeitgeist. His agent told the *Times* that the follow-up's failure was, in part, "because women resisted Dr. Kiley's suggestion that while the men in their lives might be jerks, the women who mothered them were responsible for their own problems."

If that is true, Kiley's audience understood Barrie (1860-1937)—the Scottish author who was born exactly 150 years ago—better than he himself did. To Barrie, as he scribbled in his early notes for *Peter Pan*, Peter is "a demon boy (villain of [the] story)." Seized by "the horror of growing up," he "runs away from pain & death" and has a "tragic horror of matrimony." He is a boy when he

Dawn Eden is the author of The Thrill of the Chaste: Finding Fulfillment While Keeping Your Clothes On.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A 1946 production of 'What Every Woman Knows'

literally sweeps Wendy off her feet; he is a boy when he makes a home with her; he is a boy when she decides, after a taste of Neverland domestic life, that she would rather fly off home to Mother. And he will be a boy until the end of time.

How can Wendy be "responsible for [her] own problems" when, as every little girl who sees *Peter Pan* knows, all her attempts to change Peter are futile? Witness this exchange in the home where Wendy and Peter pretend to parent the Lost Boys:

> WENDY *[knowing she ought not to probe but driven by something within]*: What are your exact feelings for me, Peter?
> PETER *[in the class-room]*: Those of a devoted son, Wendy.
> WENDY *[turning away]*: I thought so.
> PETER: You are so puzzling. Tiger Lily is just the same; there is something or other she wants to be to me, but she says it is not my mother.

Peter's helplessness, and Wendy's inability to change him, is emphasized by his creator's answer when asked by the producer Charles Frohman to provide a new subtitle for the play: "The Boy Who Could Not Grow Up." According to Barrie biographer Andrew Birkin, Frohman suggested that "Could" be changed to "Would"—"thus transforming Barrie's tragedy into Peter's triumph."

The idea that human beings are fundamentally unable to change is a theme repeated throughout Barrie's work, embodied in the counsel that a feathered friend named Solomon Caw gives Peter Pan in *The Little White Bird* (the 1902 novel in which Peter's character was introduced): "In this world there are no second chances."

In Barrie's plays, this philosophy is expressed in the essential unchangeability of the relationship between the sexes. Man and woman, by his account, do not grow in their relationship with one another; the most they can do is come to an understanding about who is in control. Successful marital unions, by his account, are built not upon shared sacrifice but shared selfishness, with each spouse granting the other an unalienable fiefdom.

Not even his happiest marrieds, the Darlings, escape this transactional view of love. Mr. Darling's duty is to bring home a salary while Mrs. Darling's duty is to make her husband feel admired. (Child care is delegated to their dog.) The opening chapters of *Peter and Wendy* accentuate the truce-like quality of their relationship, seen in the husband's practice of keeping his wife in suspense for two weeks after the birth of each of their children while he reviews their accounts to determine whether they can afford to keep the newborn. Mrs. Darling holds up her end of the bargain, attending a dinner party with her husband in order to impress his boss, even though it means leaving her children alone when she knows Peter Pan is at the window.

Following *Peter Pan*'s 1904 premiere, Barrie showed his support for the women's suffrage movement by making his heroines increasingly mannish—that is, mannish in Barrie terms, e.g., prideful and manipulative. In *Alice Sit-by-the-Fire* (1905), a childish wife battles her husband for the admiration of their children—and wins. Theirs is not a marriage per se; the children are merely pawns in their power struggle. In *What Every Woman Knows* (1908), the title refers to the inconvenient truth that the wife holds the true power behind the throne. This is borne out by heroine Maggie Shand's control over her husband's career, as she feeds him the inspirations that lead to his political success, and does it so subtly that he does not even realize he is being manipulated. Yet the play marks a certain feminist progression for Barrie as Maggie, unlike his previous female protagonists, is not a mother. In fact, she seems to have no interest in children at all—they are not so much as mentioned in the play.

Maggie's resorting to subterfuge did not sit well with those who sought greater influence for women. The feminist writer Beatrice Forbes-Robertson Hale, writing in 1914, called *What Every Woman Knows* "almost a contribution to the opposition, for it showed the heroine using those indirect arts of which we are so weary. . . . 'The Twelve Pound Look,' however, is pure gold," she added, "and we owe Barrie sincere gratitude for it."

There was, indeed, joy in suffragette city over that 1910 comedy. Ex-wife Kate deflates the pride of her former husband Harry, a wealthy egotist, by revealing that she left him not for another man but merely for the freedom afforded her by a typewriter she bought for £12. In Barrie's world, the clickety-clack of the machine signals the death knell of men's absolute monarchy. While Harry has two sons by his new wife, Kate has no children. Like Maggie of *What Every Woman Knows*, she doesn't need them in order to extend her control over men. Moreover—and here is the progression from Maggie—Barrie makes it clear that Kate

EILEEN DARBY / TIME LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

has *spiritual* progeny. We see her eyes gleam as she envisions the "two little girls" who will one day break the hearts of her ex-husband's sons by choosing men who "don't get on." We hear her voice lower as she slowly warns Harry, and "all" husbands, to be on the watch lest that "£12 look" come into their wives' eyes. Lo and behold, Harry's comeuppance is assured as his current wife admires Kate's typewriter at play's end.

But it wasn't enough for Barrie merely to create a feminist heroine. As the originator of the Wendy Dilemma, he had to atone for his previous crimes against the women's movement. This he did in remarkable fashion in his next play, *A Kiss for Cinderella* (1916), by effectively killing off Wendy and raising up Kate in her place.

Cinderella is a London charwoman who has fallen under the adorable delusion that she truly is the fairy-tale heroine. A make-believe "little mother" in the classic Barrie mode, this ultra-feminine factotum plays nurse, seamstress, and confidante to the wayward souls in her picturesquely poor neighborhood. Like Wendy, she even takes in "Lost Boys"—four young war orphans, each sleeping in a treehouse-like box nailed five feet high along the walls of her flat.

But, while Peter Pan can live forever by shirking responsibility, mother figures in Barrie's world are doomed to mortality—like Mrs. Darling who, by the time her daughter marries, is not merely dead, but "dead and forgotten." (Not for nothing did Barrie originally give *Peter Pan* the title *The Boy Who Hated Mothers*.) And so the final act of *A Kiss for Cinderella* finds its protagonist at a convalescent home, where she is dying of pneumonia. The home is run by Barrie's ideal woman, a female doctor named Bodie—a fiercely independent, no-nonsense suffragette, unmarried and childless, who does Kate of the £12 one better by doing a man's job. Barrie's stage direction gushes, "If we did not have a heroine already, we would choose Dr. Bodie."

Yet, while one of Dr. Bodie's charges raves that she is "an angel," she is more like an exterminating angel—giving Cinderella a bucolic haven to spend her final days while sending the patient's employer a "whacking bill." No wonder that, in this revision of the tale of the glass-slippered heroine, it is Dr. Bodie who wears the expensive shoes. (She is, as Cinderella observes, "very particular about her feet.") The clock struck midnight a long time ago. Now the Great War is on, it's a new day in England, the modern woman is in the ascendant, and the self-sacrificing Cinderellas of the world are destined to devolve into dust and rags. Mrs. Darling is indeed dead and forgotten; Wendy, too. Long live Kate!

No such succession occurs with Barrie's male protagonists. Throughout his career, his men remain boys. They may be boys who have charm, or pride, or courage, or brains, or (like the title character of *The Admirable Crichton*) all of the above. In his final play, the biblical drama *The Boy David*, he turned the young king of Israel into a proto-Peter Pan—even to the point of, as with *Peter Pan*, writing the role for a female actress. Not only are his men boys; his women are boys and, like David, are destined to rule, but minus the divine call to parenthood. Theirs is the independence of pure isolation from responsibility, the kind that the 19th-century feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton championed: an impregnable "solitude of self."

Man and woman, by Barrie's account, do not grow in their relationship with one another; the most they can do is come to an understanding about who is in control.

It is not without irony that the very date that would have been Barrie's hundredth birthday, May 9, 1960, saw the FDA approval of the birth-control pill, making Barrie's vision of sexually stunted solipsism available to all. In 1984, trying to promote his ill-fated *Wendy Dilemma*, Dan Kiley told *People* magazine, "I tell these women that society is responsible for the Wendy in them, but that they are responsible for right now. That's what scares them." Neverland, it seems, has become a nightmare. But wasn't it always? As Barrie observed in *Peter and Wendy*, "When you play at it by day with the chairs and table-cloth, it is not in the least alarming, but in the two minutes before you go to sleep it becomes very nearly real. That is why there are night-lights." The difference is that the child exercises control over his daydreams. "The Neverlands vary a good deal," reports Barrie. "John's, for instance, had a lagoon with flamingoes flying over it . . . while Michael, who was very small, had a flamingo with lagoons flying over it." At night, however, Neverland comes under the demon boy's jurisdiction.

G.K. Chesterton found this "subjective school of symbolism" entertaining, but ultimately unsatisfying: "It is the whole point of the best work of Barrie, for instance, that somebody is deceiving himself, but also that somebody is looking on at somebody who is deceiving himself; and if they are both deceiving themselves, so much the better for the third person who is looking on from a third angle." It is like "a world of mirrors reflected in mirrors; the reduplication of reflection; the shadow of a shade." To borrow a phrase from a certain subjectivist *par excellence*, there is no there there.

Once caught in Neverland's liminal limbo, the Darling children found that escape from the solitude of self was beyond their own power. They needed Peter's aid to find their way home. But what keeps the modern-day Wendys locked in the dilemma that finds them acting as men's mothers rather than their lovers? As Dr. Kiley discovered, much to his (and his publisher's) chagrin, it is their refusal to admit that they entered their nightmare with both eyes open. In this, at least, Barrie's heroine, upon growing up, has one up on her dilemma-ridden descendants. Wendy admits to her daughter, upon learning that the girl has heard Peter's crowing sound in her dreams, "Many girls hear it while sleeping, but I was the only one who heard it awake." ♦

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

B&A

L.A. Constitutional

You'd be surprised by the best American city for walking. **BY JOE QUEENAN**

In a *New York Times* article about the rise of the Urban Caveman (the Paleo Diet is heavy on meat) that I recently happened upon, the celebrity harbinger of doom Nassim Taleb remarked: "New York is the only city in America where you can walk." Taleb, bestselling author of *The Black Swan*, has been remarkably prescient in describing how unexpected events can ravage financial markets. But his description of Gotham as a pedestrian paradise sounds like the sort of thing any poorly informed caveman might say.

New York is *not* the only walkable city in America, and in many ways—or let us say, on many days—it is a perfectly awful city to navigate on foot. Because of the tiny distance between its north-south streets, its maniacal cab drivers, its nonstop traffic, its belligerent street vendors, its hordes of tourists, and the huge number of pedestrians who fight their way along the major arteries to get to work, get lunch, or get to Barnes & Noble to buy Nassim Taleb books, New York is a frustrating city to handle on foot at many times of the day.

In dismissing New York's claims to exclusivity in this department, I do so as an avid walker who did not begin driving until the age of 51, and who has made his way on foot around American cities as diverse as Chicago, Boston, San Francisco, Washington, Philadelphia, Indianapolis, Baltimore, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Portland, Seattle, and yes, Los Angeles. All of these cities have their own special charms and all are fun to walk in. Boston, a pocket-sized municipality, is a delight to visit on foot; you can get from Cambridge to Back Bay in less than an hour. Philadelphia's cobblestoned historic district is equally appealing to pedestrians, as is the park along the Schuylkill that stretches for miles. San Francisco is a joy for walkers, as is Chicago, whose waterfront seems to have been designed to accommodate those on foot. Of the major American cities I have visited, only Dallas and Houston strike me as cities that are not especially walkable. This is, in part, because they are both quite vast, but mostly because they are exquisitely dull.

New York, in whose environs I have lived for the past 34 years, is an *interesting* city to walk in, but that doesn't make it any more *walkable* than Baltimore or, for that matter, Columbia, South Carolina. People who say otherwise, I suspect, are people who don't actually walk that much when they visit cities that do not have gigantic subway systems, so they have no way of knowing what these cities are really like. Either that or they are simply repeating the usual well-marinated urban clichés: Parisians are unfriendly (well, maybe 20 years ago), you can't get a good meal in London (well, maybe 20 years ago), there's nothing to do in Cleveland at night (well, maybe 20 years ago).

This is another case of New Yorkers, arrogantly, provincially, yet somewhat desperately, hoping that if they say something loud enough and often enough, it will be mistaken for the truth.

People think I am being needlessly provocative when I say that I prefer Los Angeles to San Francisco—I like the people, I like the sun, I like the beach, L.A. has better museums, San Franciscans are horrible—but I do, and one reason is that I find it an endlessly fascinating city to walk in. Contrary to popular belief, it is not all that difficult for a pedestrian to get around in Los Angeles, particularly in the parts of the city he is most likely to visit. I have visited Los Angeles a hundred times in the past 23 years and almost always travel on foot. On numerous occasions I have walked from my hotel on the Sunset Strip to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, or up into the hills, or to Rodeo Drive. I have regularly taken my constitutional from the intersection of La Cienega and Beverly up to Hollywood, and from the Beverly Hills Hilton to the Farmers' Market. These hikes take about an hour, roughly the time it would take to get from Chinatown to Times Square.

From the first time I visited Los Angeles in 1987 I was struck by how untrue most of the enduring clichés about the city were. The city is not merely a maze of highways; the neighborhoods between the major arteries—say, between Santa Monica and Melrose—are filled with quiet streets with sweet little houses where normal people live. This is equally true if you stroll between Fairfax and La Brea, or in the older Jewish community around Pico, or along the winding streets tucked away between Santa Monica and Sunset. These are wonderful neighborhoods to walk in, with great buildings and beautiful gardens, and there are lots of them.

Every couple of years, I make a trek with a few friends the length of Broadway in New York, from the top of Manhattan to the bottom. The 13-mile jaunt takes five hours. We pass through all kinds of neighborhoods and see the entire history of the city as we do. It is an amazing experience. But anyone can do the same thing on Santa Monica Boulevard. You can start at Fairfax and watch as the demographics change as you wander the long strip out past Beverly Hills. You'll see all kinds of architecture, all kinds of houses, all kinds of shops, all kinds of people. There are lots of places to eat, drink, relax. I'd rather walk around Los Angeles than most other cities—including New York—any day of the week. There are no crowds, the sidewalks are in better condition, the vegetation is miraculous, and the sun's out all the time.

Don't believe me? Take a hike. ♦

Joe Queenan is the author, most recently, of Closing Time: A Memoir.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

B&A

The Dude Moment

When hipness devolves into condescension.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

When Barack Obama gets called "dude" by a comedian with a fake-news cable program whose audience is a fraction of the size of Johnny Carson's a quarter-century ago, you know we are deeply mired in an era in which American institutions, from the presidency to the late-night talk show, don't wield the innate power they once naturally possessed. Authority figures themselves have spent so much time stripping themselves of the garb of authority—losing the tie, rolling up the sleeves, dropping the g's, Tweeting—that they've stripped the authority from themselves as well.

What Jon Stewart did last week in calling the president "dude"—entirely spontaneously, which is why it's important—was a profound act of cultural leveling. It's one thing to assert that the president of the United States is no better than anyone else; that idea is built into the American DNA. It's quite another to *condescend* to the *office*, to act as though the roles of president and fake-news-show host are parallel and equal.

Stewart is an intelligent man with a deeply perceptive sense of cultural boundaries: His first major cultural moment came when he upbraided Tucker Carlson on CNN for not being serious enough, and he is careful to protect his own brand by not getting too serious himself, though he is tempted to do so nightly. Stewart's instincts told him at the moment he opened his mouth that he would not harm himself by calling the president "dude"—and he was right. Stewart gained from the exchange. The president and the presidency lost. Barack Obama revealed himself as an unauthoritative authority figure.

When an authority figure no longer radiates authority, he is no longer feared (see Machiavelli on the utility of causing fear as a means of exerting political will). Today's unauthoritative authority figure might intimidate the people closest to him no less than an authority figure of an earlier age did. But in a democracy, an authority figure achieves dominion when the people invest *him* with that power. The affectation of egalitarian informality breaks down that authority bit by bit until it crumbles.

JIM WATSON / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

It has become axiomatic to many of Obama's well-wishers and passionate supporters that something has gone wrong with his "communications skills." That misses the point. His communications skills are just fine; terrific, in fact. Any of us would kill to have his communications skills. You really have to hate him as a precondition to finding him charmless, or uninteresting, or turgid. He's none of those things. He's an interesting shaper of sentences. He says things in unexpected ways.

He can communicate. What he seems unable to do any longer is *persuade*, to command the discussion rather than merely filibuster. And here is where the primary question raised by his appearance with Jon Stewart comes in: Can the Barack Obama who has devolved into Jon Stewart's "dude" persuade anyone? Seems doubtful. Who can be swayed by a "dude"? A "dude" is someone who, by definition, you don't have to listen to. A "dude" is someone entirely on your level, if not slightly below it. And if a "dude" is 49 years old, like Obama, and the guy calling him "dude" is 47 years old, like Jon Stewart, the two of them are already making themselves seem faintly ridiculous by having the word "dude" appear in their conversation—never mind that one is a major TV star and the other is the Leader of the Free World.

Twenty years ago, when the slacker teens Bill and Ted went journeying through time on an excellent adventure to finish a high school history project so that they could eventually save the universe, the joke in the movie was that these future saviors had so stunted a sense of the universe they were fated to save that they not only called each other "dude," they called Napoleon and Socrates and Abraham Lincoln "dude." Obama went on Stewart's show explicitly to seize the attention and imagination of the young—of the sort for whom Jon Stewart is their Walter Cronkite—whose attention he had captured in 2008. Given the colossal size of his vote total, he got more than a few contemporary Bills and Teds to wander to the polling place.

But with that one "dude," Stewart instantly made it clear the distance his guest had traveled from the idealized figure of a leader for whom a vote was a cultural signpost, a way of expressing a hip sensibility, to a guest just like many of the hundreds of politicians who have visited *The Daily Show*—a straight man struggling to demonstrate that he is in on the joke. Only by calling the president "dude," Jon Stewart wasn't joking. Without meaning to do so, he exposed the corrosion of Barack Obama. The next two years will answer the question of whether that corrosion has rusted straight through. ♦

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* The Weekly Standard*'s movie critic.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"America is no better off now than it was in the late 1970s and early 1980s, says former President Jimmy Carter."
—Deseret News, *October 23, 2010*

PARODY

SDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2010 washingtonpost.com • 75¢

Carter book signing canceled after car suffers breakdown

TELEX NUMBER 'USELESS'

Former president had been driving a '77 Nova

BY DAN ZAK

RALPH KYTTLE

The president's 1977 Nova averages 14 miles per gallon.

NEW YORK — With a look of dread, the manager of the Borders Books next to Penn Station told a crowd of more than a hundred customers that "with great disappointment, former President Jimmy Carter will not be at tonight's book signing. I am very sorry, but I've been told that the president's car suffered a breakdown on the New Jersey Turnpike." Mr. Carter had been driving a 1977 Chevrolet Nova.

Even worse, the former president had been waiting for roadside assistance for several hours, unable to contact his staff since he doesn't carry a cell phone. Carter then pushed his car to the Vince Lombardi service station two miles away and, according to a gas attendant, was amazed at how short the line was. He also went out of his way to request unleaded gasoline for his car. Inside the rest stop, Carter approached a fast-food employee and ordered a Tab. "He seemed disappointed we didn't carry Tab," said the worker, "or RC Cola or Diet Rite. But he was relieved that we do sell Fresca." On his way out, the president purchased a pack of Freedent chewing gum and an issue of *Playboy* ("for the interviews," he explained to the cashier).

By the time Carter's aides had arrived, it was clear he would miss the book signing event. "On the other hand," said the president, "I might make it to my hotel in time to see the next episode of 'Starsky &

CLUELESS CONTINUED ON A6

Shall we play a game?

Biden's Leadership Thwarts Nuke Crisis

BY STEPHEN FALKEN

What experts say could have been an accidental launch of ICBMs was averted thanks to the quick thinking of Vice President Joseph Biden. In the midst of last ear fiasco, while Pen-

to reestablish a connection with 50 missiles, Biden stepped into the fray. "What I told these so-called experts," said the vice president, "was that the computer needed to play a game of Tic-Tac-Toe with itself in order to realize there is no clear winner. Just as there is no clear winner in global thermonuclear

the weekly Standard
NOVEMBER 8, 2010

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED